THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF

JEWISH MYTH, MAGIC & MYSTICISM

SECOND EDITION



REVISED, EXPANDED & ILLUSTRATED

GEOFFREY W. DENNIS

About the Author

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Concerning everything that cannot be grasped, its question is its answer.

—Ketem Paz

To my sons, Avi and Micah, who love secrets.
To Robin, the greatest angel I know.

Contents

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be waiting in the World to Come, because she’s stuck with me until then.

Introduction

Judaism is one of the oldest living esoteric traditions in the world. Virtually every form of Western mysticism and spiritualism known today draws upon Jewish mythic and occult teachings—magic, prayer, angelology, alchemy, numerology, astral projection, dream interpretation, astrology, amulets, divination, altered states of consciousness, alternative, and rituals of power—all have roots in the Jewish occult.

But for millennia, many of these core teachings have been unavailable to the general public, concealed by barriers of language and by the protective principles governing the teaching of Kabbalah, which has both nurtured and guarded such knowledge. Now, however, many more traditional texts of Jewish mysticism and magic are being translated into English and many more almost-forgotten manuscripts of Jewish esoteric teachings have been recovered and identified. At the same time, people of all backgrounds are thirsty for the kind of wisdom that can only be drawn from ancient wells. This confluence of factors inspired me to write a book like *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Myth, Magic, and Mysticism.*

> When Adam HaRishon, the First Man, sinned, he blemished all the nitzotzot (Holy Sparks) … causing them to become immersed in the kelipot … The kelipot are the husks or shells [of impurity, evil, and entropy] that imprison the fallen Holy Sparks.[1]

This is a book full of husks and sparks: of things concealed and revealed, lost and then recovered. This encyclopedia focuses exclusively on the esoteric in Judaism—the fabulous, the miraculous, and the mysterious. In this book the reader will find many *kelipot*, husks from the ancient and shattered world of Jewish occult teachings: the seemingly eccentric, the offbeat, the peripheral, and the outlandish. Much of it will strike a modern reader as dark, strange, and alien stuff indeed—husks.

Because so much has been lost over the past two centuries of what we term "modernization," even many Jews will be puzzled by the contents of this book. And to be frank, most Jews can live very satisfactory spiritual lives never having known, or never knowing, much of what can be found in these pages. So be forewarned: this is not a primer on Judaism, providing a conventional perspective on those beliefs and practices most people associate with Torah and Jewish faith. On the other hand …

Concealed within these many husks there are *nitzotzot,* or "holy sparks." Since Jewish esotericism is the oldest and most influential continuous occult tradition in the West, shaping everything from angelology to the zodiac, this book contains lore that can spiritually enrich the lives of anyone, Jewish or not, who wishes to understand the mysteries that underlie our universe. The reader who looks carefully into this book will glimpse flashes of insight, glimmers of inspiration, and sparks of wit and wisdom. For Jews, this book uncovers aspects of Judaism that have been lost to most of us until recently. For every reader, this book is meant to be a portal into an exotic alternate spiritual world, for this is a book about three things that have profoundly shaped human experience: myth, magic, and mysticism.

Already, with the word "myth," the puzzlement begins and our modern prejudices take over our thinking. For is not a myth a kind of fairy tale, a fantastic account about something that never really was? Modern Jews are constantly taught that Judaism is a religion without mythology, a faith unburdened by fanciful and grotesque "adventures of the gods." To that claim I answer, "Well, yes and no."

First of all, let us clear something up: a myth, a really good myth, is not a story about something that never happened. It's a story about something that happens all the time. Myths are archetypal tales, fabulous stories told to help us fathom important truths—truths about ourselves, our universe, and how things really are. And while it is true that Judaism (mostly) lacks stories about "God as action-hero," it

nevertheless revels in mythological tales about those things which are, to paraphrase the Psalms, “little less than God”; angels and demons, primeval monsters, magicians and miracle-workers, agents of good and evil. After all, what are the first eleven chapters of Genesis if not a carefully crafted mythic account of exactly what human beings are and how our world came to look the way it does? The simple fact is that Jewish tradition overflows with myths of deep complexity and singular wisdom.

It is much the same with regard to the magical. Modern Jews like to imagine that magic has been swept into the dustbin of history by the long, inexorable progress of rationalism. More than that, Jews have been taught from our youth that Judaism has always possessed an essentially naturalistic worldview and that magic, merely a marginal Jewish preoccupation at most, was just an anomaly resulting from our being situated (and corrupted) by the superstitions of our neighbors. But that’s not entirely accurate. It is only in the last two centuries that Jews have fully embraced science, but we have always been looking for ways to change the world for the better, whether it be through science, medicine, or “practical Kabbalah.”

Even today, rationalism has not completely displaced our sense that there is a mystical potential at work in the world; Occam’s razor has never been able to fully overpower the Sixteen-Sided Sword of the Almighty.[2] Millions of people, both Jews and gentiles, continue to believe that the stars influence our lives. Most Americans believe in the reality of angels. Jewish techniques of dream interpretation and for combating the evil eye are still widely practiced today. When you read the entries of this book on topics such as these, you will realize that magical thinking and enchanting deeds have always had a place in Judaism and, however much some might want to dismiss Judaism’s miraculous and wondrous traditions, the presence of Jewish magic in Jewish life has merely been eclipsed, never uprooted; it still has the potential to empower us.

Mysticism, the quest for an intimate encounter with God, has fared little better in modernity than Jewish myth or magic, but for different reasons than those discussed above. For despite a long retreat from its disciplines among many Western Jews from the eighteenth through twentieth centuries, Kabbalah has continued to have its champions and its practitioners.

Instead, there is a terrible irony that haunts the contemporary seeker in regard to Jewish mysticism. For it was in the middle of the last century, just at the time when sparks of renewed interest in Kabbalah were released in the world, that a terrible demonic force, Nazism, arose to engulf and extinguish the lights emanating from the countless spiritual centers of Jewish mysticism in eastern Europe. The Nazis slew many, if not most, of the precious teachers and disciples of Jewish mysticism in its monstrous campaign to blot out all things Jewish from the world. Because of the scope of that crime, those of us who would use Kabbalah in our soul journey, or who long to storm the gates of heaven, have been left with few teachers to guide us. Thus many of us have had to rediscover the ancient paths to supernal wisdom without accomplished masters to guide us on our way.

Thankfully, as we enter into a new millennium, new teachers have arisen and this generation has yielded many new devotees. Students of Kabbalah, inspired by a small but vigorous circle of self-educated leaders, have shown themselves determined not to let such divine mysteries slip into oblivion, and they have recovered and reclaimed much. Moreover, as this generation has come to better understand the wisdom and power of Kabbalah, that recovered knowledge has also helped inspire interest in related Jewish traditions—mythic traditions and occult traditions—other holy sparks, that are now included in this encyclopedia.

As I said at the beginning of this introduction, this book is a combination of kelipot and nitzotzot, of husks and sparks. While I have learned many divine lessons from these traditions, lessons that have both enriched my understanding and influenced my life, many

more of them remain still trapped in their husks; I apprehend them but do not yet understand or appreciate what they are trying to teach me. Moreover, in teaching this lore to my congregants, to my university students, to Jews, and to non-Jews alike, I have come to understand that holy sparks do not always reveal themselves to everyone at the same time, or even reveal themselves at all. Spiritually, the student has to be ready to see a spark before it can shine forth. Some teachings that I find enlightening or empowering continue to remain dark and inert for my students. Other teachings that I fail to appreciate myself, my students find illuminating. Therefore my philosophy in writing this book has been to include all the Jewish mystical, occult, and fabulous teachings I have found—even those I neither fully understand nor accept—in the hopes that a reader somewhere will perhaps find a spark in something I cannot (yet).

It has also been my approach in writing these entries to describe more than I interpret, and to interpret more than judge. At times, some interpretation is called for, and I give it my best effort, trying to be clear without oversimplifying. At other times, judgment of some sort is also appropriate, and at such occasions, I offer mine; the reader is welcome to disagree with me—in fact I encourage it. And on occasion I include comments that reflect, as one early reader called it, an "insouciant sense of humor." I feel it is right to do this because humor has always been an honored method of Jewish wisdom development. The Bible, rabbinic literature, and Kabbalah are all filled with sayings, stories, and teachings that are supposed to make us laugh. Furthermore, I hope that it will be clear to the reader that I use humor in a spirit of love, for I do love this lore, all of it, even those practices and ideas that puzzle me, trouble me, or seem at odds with my own philosophy of Torah.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

The Encyclopedia of Jewish Myth, Magic, and Mysticism was released in 2007 to remarkable reception. It was honored by both the Jewish Book Council and the Association of Jewish Librarians, and it received enthusiastic popular interest. Almost immediately people, in person and through e-mails, letters, and my blog *Jewish Myth, Magic, and Mysticism* would draw my attention to the need for something *more*: more Hebrew, more direct quotes from the sources, more illustrations, as well as terms, concepts, and themes that really deserved their own entries or expanded treatment or revision. Moreover, over the past decade, as I have continued to publish articles in academic journals and write entries for other people's encyclopedias in the fields of biblical studies, mysticism, theology, and ritual studies, I constantly uncovered new esoteric traditions and source materials.

So soon after its release, I took a copy of the EJMMM and started adding notations, comments, and source citations for further research and development. That copy went with me when I taught my own university classes, when I heard others lecture, and when I went to conferences, to retreats, and to study sessions. That battered (a mirror, perhaps, of its owner) copy of the EJMMM, now inked over with seven years of additional information and discoveries, sits next to me even now as I write this, the last element in the process of replacing it.

As with the original EJMMM, many hands have contributed to this edition. I have had the privilege to hear the presentations of leading researchers—most notably Moshe Idel, Pichas Giller, Arthur Green, Jay Michaelson, and Elliot Wolfson—who have influenced and, at times, changed my perspectives on a variety of issues. My colleagues and study *chevruta,* Rabbi Charles ("Charlie") Cytron-Walker and Rabbi Benjamin ("Ben") Sternman, have helped me investigate many issues in depth. My ongoing dialogue with my dear (but sadly distant) colleague, Rabbi Stan Zamek, has been an ongoing boon in my work. As always, my blessing, my wife Robin, has been both a ready research assistant and a patient hand-holder through this process.

And I especially want to thank the many interlocutors, most of them anonymous, on my blog who have added to this revised work. However, I do want to (partially) name Aharon, Charles, and Brem, who engaged me on several occasions and drew my attention to useful new sources and information.

Finally, my appreciation goes out to my publisher, Llewellyn Worldwide, and Elysia Gallo, its Acquisitions Editor, for giving me this opportunity to continue and advance this labor of love.

אני לדודי ודודי לי

Elul 1, 5774/August 27, 2014

How to Use This Book

The Encyclopedia of Jewish Myth, Magic, and Mysticism is the first and only comprehensive one-volume reference guide to the lore of the great Jewish esoteric traditions. For the first time, a reader has ready access to ancient mysteries and powerful practices. The EJMMM provides over one thousand A to Z entries, running from a single sentence to article length, on virtually every aspect of Jewish Kabbalah and occult lore.

In addition, each entry is cross-referenced to multiple related topics elsewhere in the EJMMM, weaving together the many Jewish esoteric concepts, terms, and practices, in order to give the reader the fullest possible understanding of the depth of Jewish wisdom and the interconnected nature of Judaism's occult teachings. Such cross-references are signified by a word appearing in **bold** font. I have also included a *Quick Reference Glossary of Frequently Used Terms* in the back to help individuals with the Hebrew and historical terms frequently used in the EJMMM. It might even be wise for the reader to begin there.

As a rule, I have tried to use the English translations of terms, making the entries easier to use for those not so familiar with Hebrew. Thus, one will find the major entry on the day of rest under "Sabbath" rather than "Shabbat." I break with this convention when I deem that a

Hebrew term will be more familiar to the reader than its translation: "dybbuk" rather than "clinging spirit," "Sefer Zohar" rather than "Book of Splendor." I apply the same rule when there simply is no adequate English translation of a term, such as "sefirot."

Yet, even as much as the EJMMM reveals, much more remains concealed. For while it explains a great deal, there is so much more to be learned by reading the original sources. Moreover, Jewish occult traditions have always been deliberately elliptical, forcing students to do further searching on their own, requiring the disciples of the wise to draw their own conclusions and form their own practice. I feel obliged to honor that approach, for it is based on sound pedagogy and admirable caution in dealing with deep matters. There is no "lazy man's path to enlightenment" in Jewish tradition. For this reason, I have provided copious citations taken from the full scope of Jewish tradition, sources both familiar and obscure; from the Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, apocalyptic, magical, rabbinic and Kabbalistic literature, and beyond. I provide these citations in the expectation that any true seeker of wisdom will have the discipline to go deeper in his or her pursuit of insight and empowerment. The footnotes and bibliography at the back of the book serve as similar resources; there is much more that can be learned on all of these topics from the teachers, books, and articles listed there.

These entries, intentionally, are only finger posts pointing a way. It is up to you, dear reader, to decide if you will continue on to the places where they point. As is said in Jewish spiritual circles, *ha-maskil yavin*, "the enlightened will understand."

On Translated Passages

All passages from the Hebrew Bible are based on the Jewish Publication Society 1917 translation, unless otherwise indicated. The translation may be modified by the author, however, to better reflect a word meaning or phrasing in the original Hebrew that is relevant to an

esoteric interpretation. Short passages may be direct translations by the author.

All passages from the Talmud are based on the 1939 Soncino translation, unless otherwise indicated. The translation may be modified by the author, however, to better reflect a word meaning or phrasing in the original Hebrew that is relevant to an esoteric interpretation.

All passages from Midrash are based on the 1939 *Midrash Rabbah* Soncino translation, unless otherwise indicated. Again, a translation may be modified for the purposes of emphasizing a particular interpretation of the passage.

All passages from Sefer Zohar, unless otherwise indicated, are based on the Pritzker Edition *Zohar.*

All translations of Sefer ha-Bahir are the author's.

Some Remarks on Hebrew Usage

In writing this book, the author has adopted a transliteration system that is user friendly to a general reader. It mostly follows modern Israeli-Sefardic pronunciation. The guttural *chet* and *chaf* are represented by a "ch" in the Latin alphabet; that's "ch" like "Bach," not "church." Since many other translators today opt to transliterate the Hebrew letter *chet* as "h," let the reader be aware: the now-common transliteration "Hasidim" will appear in this work as "Chasidim."

The author avoided most of the diacritical marks used in scholarly transliteration of Hebrew, with the exception of the occasional (') to signify a syllable stop.

Names generally follow older English usage—Abraham rather than *Avraham*—unless it is a word that has no tradition of an Anglicized name. Thus the biblical *Yaakov* is "Jacob," but the angel *Yehoel* is not changed to "Jehoel" because no one (I know) bothers to do that.

The Hebrew *fayh* is transliterated as “f” rather than the older convention of “ph,”so in the EJMMM, phylacteries will appear as “tefillin,” not “tephillin,” and the Kabbalistic diagram of divine emanations as “sefirot,” not “sephirot.”

All “a” sounds are “ah,” as in “father.”

In the EJMMM, the Hebrew *kuf* is (usually) transliterated as “k” rather than the more linguistically justified “q,” though a “q” is used if it appears in a familiar name like “Qumran.” Defying any linguistic consistency, the author uses “Kabbalah” when referring to the Jewish mystical phenomenon, but “Qabbalah” when referring to the Christian/Spiritualist offshoot. Wondering why? This would be a good time to look at the entry QABBALAH.

Some Remarks on the Illustrations

The second edition of *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Myth, Magic, and Mysticism* includes a massive increase in illustrations, from the five included in the appendix of the first edition, to now scores embedded within the entries in the second. The goal has been, as much as possible, to use or reproduce images created by Jews themselves. With a few exceptions, such is the case. Occasionally, the art of an Israelite or Jewish artifact or ancient inscription has been redrawn. A few images, too, are the work of non-Jewish artists.

By far the most prominent contribution is the many pen-and-ink illustrations by the Austrian-Jewish *Jungenstil* (Art Nouveau) artist and photographer, Ephraim Moses Lilien. Immensely popular in his time, sadly neglected today, his moody and evocative images of biblical and Jewish mythic themes still retain their power. Because his works have long since passed into the public domain (he died in 1925), it is my good fortune to be able to share many of them with you. I am delighted to be able to use the EJMMM as a platform to re-familiarize the public with this talented, creative artist.

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1. *Sefer ha-Gilgulim,* 3, as translated by Yitzchak bar Chaim.

2. See Sixteen-Sided Sword of the Almighty in the “S” section.

A



Aaron: The brother of **Moses** and **Miriam**, Aaron was both a prophet and the first High **Priest**. In Jewish tradition, he exemplifies the virtues of duty and peacemaking.

Alongside Moses, he performed various miraculous deeds and signs before **Pharaoh** and his court. Aaron transformed his **Rod** into a **Serpent**, which consumed the serpents created by Egyptian magicians (Ex. 7). The first three of the ten **Plagues** (**Blood**, **Frogs**, and lice) were initiated by Aaron at God's command (Ex. 7–8). He is one of a few select individuals who were permitted to gaze upon God while alive.

In his role as High Priest of the new sacrificial cult of God, Aaron enjoyed supernatural protection. He survived a trial by **Ordeal** when his authority was

challenged by **Korach ben Izhar** and his kinsmen. His status as High Priest evidently immunized him from divine punishment (Ex. 34; Num. 8), and he was instrumental in checking a plague sent by God among the Israelites by performing a rite with **Incense** from the **Altar** (Num. 17:1–15). According to the **Bible**, Aaron died by the will of God before entering the Land of **Israel**.

Rabbinic literature describes miraculous events surrounding the death of Aaron. God placed one **Mountain** on top of another to mark where Aaron would be buried, which is why the Bible calls his **Burial** place *Hor ha-Har* ("Mount Mountain"). Aaron was laid to rest on a couch in a luminous **Caves** on Mount Hor by **Angels**. He was then enveloped by a **Cloud** and he died by the **Kiss** of God (Yalkut Chukkat 764; Lev. R. 10; Mid. Teh. 83.1).

In the mystical theosophy of the **Sefirot**, Aaron symbolizes the **Emanation** of **Hod**, divine glory. He is also one of the **Ushpizin**, the spiritual ancestors invited to sit in the **Sukkah** with the living during the holiday.

It is interesting to note that despite the many theurgic-religious elements in the biblical accounts of him and the magical attributes of his **Rod**, unlike Moses, Aaron is not widely portrayed as a magician in non-Jewish circles.

Aaron of Baghdad: A mysterious, possibly mythical figure, whom early medieval mystics in Western Europe credited with the pivotal role of bringing Jewish esoteric traditions to them from the **East**.[1] A number of miraculous tales about him have been preserved in books such as **Yuhasin, Sefer**: **Exorcism**, dispelling witchcrafts, and combating **Zombies** . He is also referred to by the honorific Abu Aharon "Father Aaron." *SEE* Abba.

1. G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1961), 41, 84.

Abaddon: (אבדון). "Destruction." One of the compartments of **Gehenna/Gehinnom** (MG). In the book of Job, it is **Death** personified. The New Testament identifies Abaddon as the "Angel of the Abyss" (Rev. 9:11).

Abba: (אבא). "Father." A Talmudic holy man who, although not an ordained rabbi, has shown spiritual or **healing** powers. The word is also applied in various ways to the mystical **Pleroma**.*SEE* Partzufim; Sefirot .

Abbahu, Rabbi: Talmudic Sage (ca. 3rd–4th centuries). Abbahu was a man of exceptional physical perfection, rivaling that of **Jacob (also Israel)** and **Adam** (B.M. 84a). When he sat and interpreted the **Torah**, supernal fire would flash around him (S of S R. 1:10). He experienced clairvoyant **Dream** (J. Tan. 1:4, 64b). He once escorted **Elijah** to **Eden, Garden of**, where he gathered **Healing**

leaves, wrapping them in his cloak. Afterward he discovered his cloak had such a heavenly scent that he could sell it for a great price (B.M. 114a–b). An avid collector of lore, both legal and legendary, such as this **Many Worlds** teaching:

> R. Abbahu said: This proves the Blessed Holy One went on creating worlds and destroying them until He created this one … This is Abbahu's reason: *And God saw everything that He made and behold; it was very good [comparatively, meaning]*. This pleases Me, but those [worlds] did not please Me. (Gen. R. 3:7)

He also preserved stories of how **Angels** intervened in the lives of biblical figures (PdRE 16, 43). He was given a glimpse of his reward in the *Olam ha-Ba* (the **World to Come**) before he died, which appeared to him as thirteen rivers of soothing balm (J. A.Z. 3:1). When he did die, the building pillars in his hometown, Caesarea, voiced their mourning (M.K. 25b; J. A.Z. 3:1, 42c).

Abaye: A Talmudic Sage, folk and metaphysical healer. He credited his **Healing** skills to the teachings of his foster mother (Shab. 134a; Kid. 31b). He provided a pivotal interpretation of the **Bible**, which establishes that humans may attempt to heal others (i.e., practice medicine), even though God may have been the source of the affliction (Ber. 60a). Something of a trickster, Abaye once manipulated Rabbi **Acha ben Jacob** into exorcizing a **Demons** from his house of study (Shab. 66b; Kid. 29b).

According to later **Kabbalah**, Abaye was descended from **Cain**, which accounts for why he never settled in one place. Nevertheless, through his great mastery of the **Torah**, he brought significant rectification to his damaged "root-soul," improving the future for his descendants (*Sha'arei ha-Gilulim* Ch. 36.4).

Abbreviations: (ראשי תבות). The use of abbreviations appears in Hebrew writings as early as the 2nd century BCE. Variously called **Notarikon**, *siman*, or *roshei tevot*, abbreviations have been widely used for the functional purpose of saving space at a time when writing materials were costly and scarce. But even though the origins of the practice are obviously utilitarian, this method of writing is, in fact, a kind of **Encryption**. As such, abbreviations can also be a form of esoteric communication. Over time, certain kinds of abbreviations, such as acronyms (words formed from the first letter or syllable of other words) and **Acrostic** (verses arranged so that a particular letter from each line, taken in order, spells out a word or phrase), came to be regarded as dynamic sources of **Secret** knowledge and power to Jewish mystics and to magical practitioners of all

persuasions.[1] Thus the name for the month preceding the High Holy Days, אלול/ *Elul*, is seen as an acronym for ***A****ni* ***L****'dodi* ***V****'dodi* ***L****i* ("I am my beloved's and He is mine"). In another example, בראשית/**Bereshit** (Gen. 1:1, "In the beginning") is understood to be an acronym for ***B****ara* ***R****akia,* ***E****retz,* ***Sh****amayim,* ***Y****am* ***T****ahom* ("He created the **Firmament**, land, heaven, sea, and **Abyss**"). The use of a biblical verse or phrase for the purpose of invoking its innate power as God's words is very common, though it should be noted that the Mishnah (Sanh. 10:1) objects to the use of **Torah** verses in medicinal spells. Jewish folk healers may have regarded the abbreviation of such verses as a way to make an end-run around that objection.[2] Examples of various such abbreviations include biblical verses:

שיחן/**ShYChN—*****Sh****uvah* ***Y****ah* ***Ch****atzah* ***N****afshi*, "Return Adonai, save my life" (Ps. 6:5)

or a title of God:

שי/ **ShY**—***Sh****omer* ***Y****israel*, "Guardian of Israel" (Ps. 121)

An abbreviation can also be derived a "powerful" verse from Jewish **Prayer**:

אגלא/ **AGLA—*****A****tah* ***G****ibor* ***L****'olam* ***A****donai*, "You are Forever Powerful, O Eternal" (Gevurot prayer)

or an adjuration:

באחו/ **BAChV**—***B****ashem* ***E****l* ***Ch****ai* ***V****'kayyam*, "[Do this] in the name of the living and enduring God" [2]

Or a petition for blessing:

במט/ **BMT**—***B'M****azal* ***T****ov*, "[Bless me] with good fortune"

It can be for invoking the protection of angels:

ארגמן/ **ARGMN**—***U****riel,* ***R****afael,* ***G****avriel,* ***M****ikhael,* ***N****uriel*

or for the kabbalistic **sefirot**:

כבתם/ **CHBTM—*****Ch****ochmah,* ***B****inah,* ***T****iferet,* ***M****alchut*

In **Kabbalah**, abbreviations are sometimes called *tzeruf otiyot,* or letter combinations. Perhaps the most famous of these is related to the Talmudic story (Ber. 55a) of the **Four Sages** who entered **Pardes** ("Paradise"). Tradition teaches

that *pardes* ("orchard") is also an acronym for the four methods of the Torah interpretation: פרדס/***P**ashat, **R**emez, **D'**rash,* and **Sod** ("plain meaning, allegoric, homiletic, and esoteric"). In other words, the living may find entry to Paradise by penetrating into the mysteries concealed within the Torah text.

Abbreviations are also an almost universal feature on **Amulet**. One talismanic acronym is the word **Shaddai, El** (שדי) that appears on a **Mezuzah**. The word itself is a biblical **Names of God**, but also stands for ***S**homer **D**elatot **Y**israel* ("Guardian of the doorways of Israel"). The presence of this acronym-incantation helps give the mezuzah its protective power. **Magic Square** and diagrams constructed from different kinds of abbreviations dot medieval Jewish books on mystical knowledge, **Magic**, and **Alchemy**.

Names of worthy figures are sometimes held to be abbreviations of esoteric teachings. Thus the name **Jacob**, *YAaKoV*, is actually made up of four titles of God, ***Y**otzrecha*, ***O**secha*, ***K**onecha*, and ***B**orecha* (your Former, your Maker, your Owner, your Creator), revealing God's special relationship with Jacob, and through him, his descendants. The most notable and widespread name abbreviation custom to this day is the various methods adopted for writing an abbreviation for the **Tetragrammaton** so that it may not be pronounced and to thereby prevent the erasure or destruction of God's written name. *SEE* Hafuch;Israel;Temurah;Tzeruf/Tzerufim.

1. I. Singer, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (New York: KTAV, 1901), 39–43.

2. E. Davis, "The Psalms in Hebrew Medical Amulets," *Vetus Testamentum*, XLII, 2 (1992).

Abdiel: (עבדיאל). "Servant of God." An angel mentioned in **Raziel, Sefer** and **Zohar Chadash** (Yitro 39.4). John Milton uses him as a character in *Paradise Lost.*

Abel: According to *Etz Chayyim*, the **Soul** of the murdered eldest son of **Adam** and **Eve** underwent successive transmigrations, first into Seth, then **Noah**, and finally **Moses**, where he achieved the **Tikkun**, or rectification of his soul ("Palace of **Adam Kadmon**").

Abihu: The brother of Nadav. *SEE* Nadav And Abihu.

ABiYAh: (אביע). This word is a mystical acronym for the **Four Worlds of Emanation** of kabbalistic cosmology: **Atzilut**, **Beriyah**, **Yetzirah**, and **Asiyah** .

Ablution: *SEE* Immersion;Mikvah Or Mikvaot;Water.

Abner: The commander of **Saul's** army. The Philistines were not the only ancients who employed **Giants**. Abner was so enormous that while he slept, David was able to crawl beneath his crooked knees and so escape a trap Saul had set for him (Eccl. R. 9:11; Yalkut Jer. 285; AbbS). He was the son of the **woman of Endor** (PdRE 33).

Abracadabra: (אבראכדברא). The archetypal *voce magica*, magical word. Many claim it to be of Jewish origin, reading it as a kind of fractured Aramaic, אברא-כדברא /*ab'ra k'dabra*, meaning, "I will create according to the word." This is plausible, assuming the Aramaic syntax has undergone corruption. It is also plausible that it is of non-Jewish origin. Some speculate it is derived from the same root as the angelic name **Abraxas**. *SEE* Hebrew And Hebrew Alphabet;Incantations, Spells, And Adjurations;Magic.

Abraham: The progenitor of the Jewish people, Abraham is also considered in rabbinic tradition to be a natural philosopher, a mystic, and a **Prophet** second only to **Moses**. He personifies loving-kindness, devotion, and faithfulness.

In the **Bible**, Abraham not only responds to the direct command of God to leave his homeland for Canaan, he has several encounters with **Angels** (Gen. 18, 22). He also engages in a mysterious divinatory **Ritual**, either a dream **Incubation** or a summoning ceremony that brings no less than God to earth in the form of a fiery **pillar** (Gen. 15). In the **Midrash**, he is granted many **miracles**. To save him as an infant from the wrath of evil King **Nimrod**, he is secreted away in a **cave**, where the angels feed and minister to him. According to the text *Ma'asei Avraham Avenu*, God later delivers him from a fiery martyrdom planned for him by Nimrod.

In several sources, he is celebrated as an astrologer (*Book of Jubilees*; B.B. 16b). In one Midrash, he sees his infertility is written in stars, but comes to learn that God has power over even the astral influences. This then explains God's decision to change his name from Abram to Abraham (Gen. 15), for in changing his name, God also changes his **fate**. From this experience, Abraham gives up the practice of **astrology** (Zohar III:216a; Aggadat Bereshit). He also possesses the legendary **tzohar** stone that gives him the power to heal others (B.B. 16b).

The reason God commands him to circumcise himself (Gen. 17) is that this act of self-perfection will make the spirit of **Prophecy** more accessible to him (PdRE 29; Tanh. Lech Lecha 20). The story of his self (and selfless) surgery leads one source to declare Abraham serves as a kind of **psychopomp,** directing **Souls** after **Death** to their destination. Just as he did in this world, in the **World**

to Come, the beloved **ancestor** awaits wayfaring souls—just not in the place one would expect:

> As he sat in the tent door in the heat … R. Levi said, "[I]n the World-To-Come, Abraham will sit at the entrance of Gehenna and permit no circumcised child of Israel to descend there …"(Gen. R. 48:8)

In the **Zohar**, he is credited with the knowledge to create a **golem** (Zohar I:79a), a knowledge alluded to in the biblical text (Gen. 12:5). This tradition springs from a single reference to him in the final chapter of Sefer Yetzirah. Because of this same reference, some mystics also regard Abraham to be the author of that work. Abraham also possessed a miraculous **healing** stone, the tzohar. After his death, God suspended it from the **sun**, enhancing the sun's healing powers (B.B. 16b).

In early **Kabbalah**, Abraham comes to be regarded as an archetype, a personification of sefirotic attributes. In later works, this logic is reversed, with Abraham being treated as a divine attribute whose dynamic function in the world is expressed allegorically through the Abraham saga found in the **Torah**. He represents the sefirah of **Chesed**, pure love. (Pes. 118a; Gen. R. 38, 61; *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* 1:13; Zohar I:203b). The spirit of Abraham still comes to call upon his descendants when they dwell in the **sukkah** during the holiday of **Sukkot**. He is welcomed in a ritual of greeting and **hospitality**. *SEE* PATRIARCHS AND MATRIARCHS; RIGHTEOUS, THE .

Abraham, Apocalypse of: A 2nd-century-CE document that contains revelations of future history and a **vision** of **Heaven**, probably of Jewish origin but also now including Christian glosses. It exists today only in Slavic language translation. It recasts Abraham as the archetypal **priest**, initiated into this role by the angel **Yahoel**. The rabbinic sources also preserve hints of the idea of Abraham initiating a **priesthood** that prefigures the levitical priests (Gen. R. 43:6, 46:5, 55.6; Ned. 32b; Lev. R. 25.6).

Abraham Azulai: Kabbalist (Moroccan, ca. 17th–18th century). He wrote *Avraham L'chesed* and an influential commentary on the **Zohar**. One source credits him with performing wondrous deeds, but as there are at least three prominent Abrahams in the Azulai family, this cannot be verified.

Abraham ben David of Posquieres: Legalist, mystic, and polemicist (Provencal, ca. 12th century). He experienced a visitation of **Elijah**, who provided him with guidance in his studies (Commentary on *Yad ha-Chazakah*).

Abraham ben Moses: Kabbalist (Egyptian, ca. 13th century). A mystic influenced by Sufism. Because most of his works have been lost or only survived in fragmentary form, he is most notable for being the son of **Maimonides** .

Abraham ben Simeon: Magician, alchemist, and world traveler (German, ca. 14th century). Abraham is the author of *Cabala Mystica*, "The Mysterious Tradition" (or alternately, *Segulot Melachim*, "Angelic Remedies"). Abraham not only told tales of how he enjoyed royal patronage from many European princes, he even claimed to have given two popes occult advice. Much of what we know about Abraham is in doubt—the veracity of these stories themselves, or even whether Abraham was actually a Jew or a Christian of Jewish parentage.[1]

1. R. Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Source Book* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 271–89.

Abraham ibn Ezra: *SEE* Ibn Ezra, Abraham.

Abraham, Testament of: The Testament is a 2nd-century-CE apocalyptic text describing Abraham's **ascent** into **Heaven**. It appears to be a Jewish text heavily glossed by Christian copyists. It survives only in Greek.

Abraxas: An **Angel** mentioned extensively in the Gnostic tradition. His name may be an acronym for the Greek names of the **planets**. Modern scholars Abraham Geiger and Giuseppe Barzilai attempt to explain his name as derived from **Hebrew**, but their theories are not widely accepted. While most likely of non-Jewish origins, in Greek magical texts he is often listed alongside Hebrew-derived names for God. He eventually gets assimilated into Jewish angelology and appears in later Jewish **amulets** and in medieval Jewish lists of angels.

Abu Aharon: *SEE* AARON OF BAGHDAD.

Abulafia, Abraham: (1240–1291?). Medieval Spanish Kabbalist, self-proclaimed **Prophet**, and failed **Messiah**. Abulafia practiced and taught a sophisticated and novel form of ecstatic (or as he called it, "prophetic") **Kabbalah** that, until recent times, has not received much general attention, no doubt due to his controversial personality and career. In his own lifetime, his claims and unorthodox teachings earned him condemnation from rabbinical authorities. Fortified by belief in his own messianic identity, Abulafia at one point sought an audience before Pope Nicholas III in order to convert him. Not surprisingly, he was imprisoned for spreading his "gospel." More surprising is that he actually survived the ordeal, outliving the pope in question. His teachings are enjoying a

revival on two fronts: renewed scholarly research, and the revival of his techniques within contemporary meditative circles.[1] *SEE* MEDITATION; TZERUF/Tzerufim; VISION.

1. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 120–46; A. Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1982), 57–71. Also M. Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (New York: SUNY Press, 1988).

Abyss: (תהום/*Tehom*). The name for the primordial waters that preceded **Creation** and are now trapped below the crust of the **Earth** (Gen. 1:2; Gen. R. 13:13; Ps. 104). Linguistically, the word is derived from the same root as the Akkadian *Tiamat*, the watery chaos monster of Mesopotamian mythology. It was the *tehom* that God released like fountains from under the earth to initiate the Flood (Gen. 7:11).

The stone upon which **Jacob** rested his head was the stone that kept the *tehom* sealed up. This would later serve as the foundation of the **Temple** (PdRE 23). In temple times, the ritual of the water libations was performed to draw up these tellurian waters to help to moisten and fructify the earth (Tan. 25b). The purpose of the ritual was to draw the now domesticated underground waters of the abyss toward the surface of the earth, to trigger the fructifying mingling of tellurian (subterranean/circular/feminine) and heavenly (rain/linear/masculine) waters that would allow growth in the coming season (T. Tan. 1:4; Tan. 10b; PdRE 23).

In its less literal applications, *tehom* can also refer to the realm of the dead, the place where evil spirits and wicked **Souls** dwell. In later Jewish **eschatology**, it is one of the seven compartments of **Gehenna** (MG). The **Midrash** also uses the term metaphorically, as referring to Israel's subjugation under Rome (Gen. R. 2.4). Lovers of **gematria** note that *tehom* has the same numeric value as *ha-mavet*, "death." The concept of the abyss is thus a multivalent mythic symbol for the negative and undesirable traits of this world, which have their roots in what preceded the formation of the cosmos. *SEE* CHAOS; WATER.

Academy on High: *SEE* YESHIVA SHEL MALAH.

Acha ben Jacob: Talmudic Sage (ca. 4th century). He was a storyteller, folk healer, and exorcist.

In a famous extended discussion of Job reported in the **Talmud**, Acha expounded on the nature of **ha-Satan**, the adversary, explaining that both "Satan and Peninah have a pious function [in their roles as adversaries/antagonists]." This insight on the divine necessity of spiritual obstacles inspired Satan to appear before Acha in person and **kiss** his feet (B.B. 16a).

He once defeated a **demon** in the form of a seven-headed hydra:

> Jacob the son of R' Acha bar Jacob: his father sent him to Abaye [to attend Abaye's house of study]. When he [Jacob] returned, he [R. Acha] saw that his lessons weren't sharp. He said to him, "I take priority to you; you return [home] so I can go [study there and see the problem] … Abaye heard that he was coming. There was a djinn in Abaye's Rabbinical academy, such that when they [students] entered in pairs, even during the day, they would be hurt. He [Abaye] said [to the academy]. "Perhaps a miracle will occur [because of Acha's merit]." He [R. Acha] entered and slept in the academy. It appeared to him as a seven-headed serpent. Every time he prostrated himself [prayed], another head fell off. In the morning he said to them, "Had a miracle not occurred, you would have endangered me." (Kid. 29b)

Acha's end is also a cautionary tale of the dangers of the **evil eye**. According to Baba Batra 14a, he made a **Torah** scroll so perfect in form and dimensions that his colleagues were overwhelmed with envy, causing his death.

Acherit ha-Yamim: (אחרית ימים). "The End of Days." *SEE* ESCHATOLOGY; JUDGMENT, DAY OF; MESSIAH.

Acosmism: The doctrine that the created, material universe is an illusion. This radical theology is most commonly associated with the Hasidic CHaBaD movement, beginning in the early 19th century. According to this belief, God is the only reality. The biblical proof text for this claim is Deuteronomy 4:35, "It has been clearly demonstrated to you that **Adonai** alone is God; there is no more than Him alone." The same can be inferred to the phrase in the **Aleinu Prayer**, "In truth, You are our King, *there is nothing else*."

In point of fact, the CHaBaD teaching is more complicated than simply denying reality. It is "subjective acosmism," the belief that the world does not exist *from God's perspective* because all things unfold within divinity (*Tanya* 320, 155, 174), while from human perspective, the universe is real, because we cannot discern the oneness and innate divinity of all things (*Sha'arei ha-Yichud ve'ha-Emunah* I:2). In short, we exist, but have no substance, like a [divine] thought. The resemblance between this and Hindu cosmology is often noted. The doctrine has not enjoyed wide popularity beyond CHaBaD, because it seemingly undermines the reality of all distinctions, especially moral ones, historically a central premise of Judaism.

Acrostic: *SEE* ABBREVIATIONS; HAFUCH; NOTARIKON; TEMURAH; TZERUF/Tzerufim.



Adam

Adam: (אדם ראשון/*Adam Rishon*). Adam is the first human being and an archetype for all humanity. One Kabbalistic teaching reveals that the word *ADaM* is a mystical **abbreviation** for the essence of human nature: ***A**damah* (earth), ***D**ibur* (speech), and Ma'aseh (action).

God placed him in the **Garden of Eden**. According to Alef-Bet of ben Sira, he was wed first to **Lilith**, whom God had made simultaneously with him. When they argued, she flew off to become the queen of **demons**. Only after that did God create **Eve** (AbbS).

He also had numerous other dealings with **Angels** and demons. **Gabriel** and **Michael** were the witnesses at his **Wedding** to Eve. Not only was he later tricked by the **serpent**, but he was also seduced by **succubae**, generating demonic offspring (Eruv. 18b; Gen. R. 20:11; PdRE 20). Before his expulsion from Eden, Adam was clothed in divine **glory**. After the fall, God made miraculous **garments** for both Adam and Eve that never wore out. Adam also received from the angel **Raziel** the **tzohar** , a **gemstone** holding the primordial **light** of **Creation**. Along with Eve, he was laid to rest in the **Cave** of Machpelah in the middle of the Garden of Eden, where their bodies lie concealed from mortal sight in a state of luminescent and fragrant preservation. The **Zohar**

teaches that at the hour of **Death** every person sees Adam (Num. R. 19:18; Gen. R. 17; B. Eruv. 18b; A.Z. 8a; Sot. 9b; Tanh. Bereshit; Zohar I:127a–b). *SEE* GARMENTS OF ADAM.

Adam Kadmon: (אדם קדמון). "Primordial Man." Also called *Adam Elyon* or *Adam Ila'ah*. Not to be confused with the frail figure of **Adam** in the Genesis account, who is formed from clay (Gen. 2:7), Adam Kadmon is the supernal, first creation of God that is made in the **divine image** (Gen. 1:26–27). Drawing on Platonic notions of "forms," the teachings about Adam Kadmon explain that he is the true "image of God," a majestic vessel of divine **glory**, the ideal human (PdRK 4:4, 12:1; Lev. R. 20:2). All earthly humans are in His image. We are an image of an image, as it were (B.B. 58a):

> Said Rabbi Hiyya: "When the Holy One created man to dwell upon the earth, he formed him according to the likeness of Adam Kadmon, the heavenly man. When the angels gazed upon him [Adam Kadmon], they exclaimed: 'You have made him almost equal to God and crowned him with glory and honor.' After the transgression and fall of Adam, it is said the Holy One was grieved at heart because it gave occasion for repeating what they had said at his creation, 'What is man that You should be mindful of him, or the son of man that You should visit him.' " (Ps. 7:5)

According to the **Midrash**, Adam Kadmon is androgynous, incorporating all the aspects of both genders. He is also a macrocosm, extending from one end of the universe to the other and containing all **Creation**. The Rabbis believed Adam Kadmon embodied and exemplified the Creation. Thus the medieval **Bible** commentator Abraham ibn Ezra wrote,

> One who knows the secret of the human soul and the structure of the human body is able to understand something of the upper worlds, for the human body is the image of a microcosm. (Commentary on Ex. 25:40) [1]

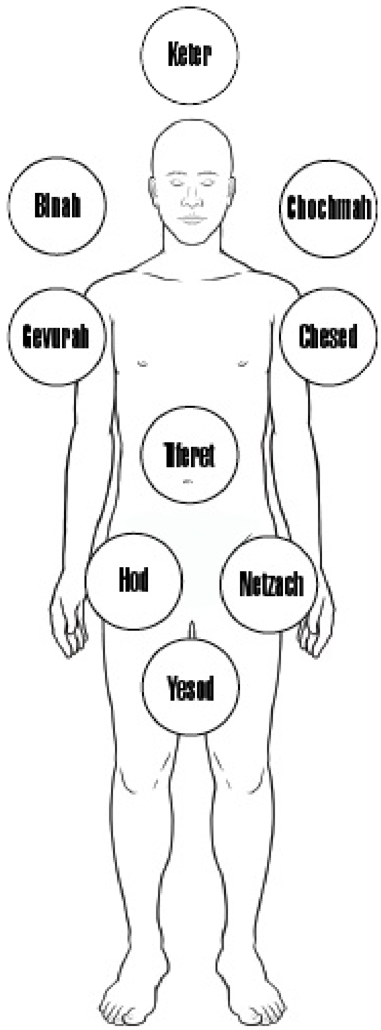
When he was created, in fact, he was so awesome the angels mistook him for a god and began to worship him (Gen. R. 8:1; Lev. R. 14:1; Chag. 12b, 14b).

The "heavenly man" becomes a prominent aspect of many Kabbalistic systems, starting with the **Bahir,** which sees Adam Kadmon as the source **Soul** of all human souls:

> In its [the World to Come discussed earlier] hand is the treasury of souls. In the time when Israel is good, these souls are worthy of going forth and coming into this world. But if they are not good, then [these souls] do not go

> forth. We therefore say, “The son of David will not come until all the souls in the *Guf* [Body] are completed.” What is the meaning of “all the souls in the *Guf* [Body]”? We say this refers to all the souls in the body of Adam [Kadmon]. [When they are completed] new ones will be worthy of going forth. (Bahir 184)

In many mystical sources, Adam Kadmon signifies the totality of the **sefirot**. Often, the ten sefirot are shown superimposed on the figure of the Adam Kadmon to represent his mediating role between God and Creation—he is literally the embodiment of divine attributes as well as the place of the universe.



Adam Kadmon

In Lurianic **Kabbalah**, he is the **light** that fills primordial space after the light of God is withdrawn. Luria sees the Jewish project as bringing a restoration of humanity to the state of Adam Kadmon. Chayyim Vital, elaborating on the Bahir, sees Adam Kadmon as a kind of “world soul” that precedes the rest of

creation and finds repetitions of him at each stage of the chain of **Creation** (Gen. R. 8:1, 10; Sanh. 38a; Zohar II:48a, 70b; *Etz ha-Chayyim* 1). He also teaches that various facets of all the subsequent human souls reflect the location from which they were derived (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot*).

Some scholars theorize that **Gnosticism** is the source for the Jewish tradition of Adam Kadmon.[2] Christian scriptures also allude to the tradition of Adam Kadmon, linking the idea to **Jesus** (1 Cor. 15:45–50). This idea reappears in the heretical sect of Shabbateanism, which holds Shabbatai Tzvi to be both the **Messiah** and the incarnation of Adam Kadmon.

The concept of Adam Kadmon has served mystics in their efforts to exalt and elevate the status of humanity (in potential) and emphasize the divine aspect of man.

1. Jacobs, "Olam Katan," http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ethics/Our_Bodies/Themes_and_Theology/Body_as_Microc

2. I. P. Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism* (San Francisco: Harper-Cross, 1990), 99–100, 113, 165–66.

Adamah: (אדמה). "Earth." In **Midrash** and the **Zohar**, based on the source, it is the second, third, or sixth of the seven material worlds (Hag. 12a–b; MhG I.16; *Seder Rabbah ha-Bereshit* 5–28). **Adam** had to journey through it after his expulsion from **Eden**. **Abel**, **Cain**, and Seth were born on this plane. The creatures that dwell there are perpetually sad. This is where humans and om God had made simultaneously with him. When they argued, she flew off to become the queen of **demons** interacted freely (*Sitre Torah,* Zohar I:253b–254a). *SEE* WORLDS, MANY.

Adar: (אדר). This month in the Hebrew **calendar** falls in the spring. Its **zodiac** is Dagim. The minor holiday of **Purim** occurs in Adar. As the last month before Nisan, the month of **Exodus**, before the events of Purim it was considered an ill-fortuned month.[1]

1. G. Erlanger, *Signs of the Times: The Zodiac in Jewish Tradition* (Jerusalem: Feldman Publishing, 1999), 245.

Adat El: (עדת אל). "Divine Assembly." The **Bible** describes the God of **Israel** as presiding over a conclave of divine and numinous beings (Deut. 32; Pss. 82, 89:6, 95:3; Job 1). The assembly gathers in a sacred tent atop a cosmic **mountain** (Ps. 15; Isa. 14:13). This was likely derived from pre-Israelite Canaanites who believed that the gods assembled in the sacred tent of El, the supreme god:

> She [Anat] stamped her feet and left the earth; then she headed toward El, at the source of the two rivers [Mount Zaphon] in the midst of the two seas' pools; she opened El's tent and entered the shrine of the King, Father of Time … [1]

The construction of the **tabernacle** by the Israelites is meant to provide God with a parallel earthly abode (Ex. 24–34). In the later books of the Bible and post-biblically, this assembly was updated, refined, and reimagined into the concept of the angelic court attending upon God, who is envisioned as a divine monarch who consults with the court, but is not bound by their opinions (Sanh. 38b; Gen. R. 8:4). Coinciding with the creation of a permanent earthly **Temple**, the same sources start to re-envision the sacred tent of assembly as a *heichal*, a "**palace**." *SEE* Angel And Angelology ; HOST OF HEAVEN.

1. M. D. Coogan, trans., *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1978), 12, 95.

Adiriron Adiron: (אדירירון). In quasi-**Hebrew**, this is "Mighty One" or "Mighty of the Mighty." The odd *–ron* ending resembles the morphology of **Metatron**. Sometimes the name is divided into *Adir Yiron.*

This is a divine title, originally a euphemism for the **Tetragrammaton**, [1] but later regarded as a magical name in its own right, or a **cherub**, identified with Akatriel-YaH.[2] It is most often mentioned in association with some aspect of the *Merkavah,* the divine **chariot**. Thus it appears in Hechalot Rabbati 14:

> When a person seeks to descend to the Chariot he will call upon Surya, the Prince of the Countenance, and make him swear one hundred and twelve times in the name of Tutrusyiyah [with many titles] … and Adiriron-YHVH, Lord of Israel … [3]

In Sefer Hechalot, he is listed as one of three high **Angels** that personify a divine attribute. In the case of Adiriron, that attribute is God's *koach* ("power"). This association of Adiriron with "power" is repeated elsewhere—**Michael** receives some of his angelic power from Adiriron. He commands every *Saraf* **Angel**. Later he is described as the *rokeiv* ("rider") upon the wheels [of the divine chariot], perhaps this means he is a cherub, but by any account Adiriron is a driving force in the divine superstructure, suggesting that he is a personification of the "dynamos," the attribute of power within the Pleroma,[4] and the reason that the name/entity fades from use is that later **Kabbalah** would refer to this same divine phenomenon as Gevurah**.** The name continues to be used in magical literature, as part of **amulets** made of deerskin to protect a newly constructed dwelling place (*Mifalot Elohim* 59) and in cherem adjurations.

1. D. Abrams, “From Divine Shape to Angelic Being: The Career of Akatriel in Jewish Literature,” *Journal of Religion* 76 (1996): 58.

2. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 56, 363.

3. R. Margaliot, *Malachei Elyon* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1987), 2 [translation is the author’s].

4. J. Dan, *The ‘Unique Cherub’ Circle* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1999), 113.

Adjuration: *SEE* Magic

Adonai: (אדוני). “My Lord.” A Jewish appellation for God that gradually became a euphemism commonly used in order to avoid saying the **Tetragrammaton** (Yoma 39b–40a). The word *Adonai* eventually developed an aura of mystery itself. As such, it became a name of power, alongside the Tetragrammaton, attractive to both Jewish and non-Jewish magical practitioners. Consequently, it frequently appears in spells, **amulets**, and other magical devices. *SEE* NAMES OF GOD.

Adonaiel: An angel mentioned in the **Testament of Solomon**.

Adversary, the: *SEE* SATAN OR Ha-Satan.

Af and Chemah: (אף/כמה). *Af* and *Chemah* (or Hemah) are **Hebrew** for “Wrath” and “Anger.” The angelic names are derived from Psalm 37:8 and Deuteronomy 9:19, where these two words are understood to be proper nouns—the personifications of God’s fury.

Af and Chemah are two of the five—or six—**Angels of Death** (sources vary), the others being **Gabriel** over kings; Kapziel over youths; Mashbir over **animals**; Mashchit over children. Af and Chemah are the destructive angels over men and beasts (BhM 2:98). Unlike the others, however, these are often paired together, apparently because they are chained to each other with bonds of black and **red** fire on the seventh level of heaven (*Gedulat Moshe*).

They have been unleashed on **Earth** several times, most notably to destroy **Jerusalem** for its sins (Shab. 55a) and to punish **Moses** for failing to circumcise his son Gershon (Ex. 4):

> R. Judah b. Bizna lectured: When Moses was lax in the performance of circumcision, Af and Hemah came and swallowed him up, leaving naught but his legs. Thereupon immediately Zipporah “took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son”; straightway he [they?] let him alone. In that moment Moses desired to slay them, as it is written, “Cease from Af and forsake Hemah.” (Deut. 9:19; Ned. 32a)

Though it does not mesh with the chronology of other stories about these entities, one of the most oft-repeated legends is connected to Exodus 32:11–13. In this story, God unleashes Af and Chemah as two of five "destroying angels" against the people of **Israel**. **Moses** summons the *amudei ha-olam*, the meritorious **ancestors** (**Abraham**, **Isaac**, and **Jacob**, the three names he invokes in verse 13) to neutralize three of the angels with their powers of **love**, but Moses is left to dispatch the other two himself. Being a prayer-warrior, the son of Amram slays them with his sincere supplications. Af and Chemad are then buried in the valley of Moab, and Moses is buried in front of them to ensure they can never return to harm the Jewish people (variant accounts of this appear in Ex. R. 41.7, 44:8; Tanh. Ki Tissa 20; PdRE 45; and Deut. R. 3.11).

Afikoman: (אפיקומן). *SEE* PASSOVER; UNLEAVENED BREAD.

Afterlife: *SEE* DEATH; ETERNAL LIFE; KINGDOM OF GOD; REINCARNATION; RESURRECTION.

Aggadah: (אגדה). "Story/Narrative/Legend." This is the catchall term for all the nonlegal materials in rabbinic literature—narratives, interpretations, poems, theology, etc. Most mythic, fabulous, and occult teachings are found embedded in the aggadic portions of Jewish literature.

AGLA: (אגלא). An acrostic name of God constructed from the **Hebrew** phrase, ***A**tah **g**ibor **l**'olam **A**donai*, "You are eternally mighty, O Eternal" (Gevurot prayer, *Siddur*). It was often used in **exorcism** rites, Christian as well as Jewish, and appears on **amulets**.

Agrat: *SEE* IGRAT.

Agriculture: *SEE* FERTILITY; FIRSTBORN; FOOD; ISRAEL, LAND OF.

Ahijah: (Alternately, Ahia ha-Shiloni) . A biblical **Prophet** who lived in the time of King Jeroboam. He died a martyr's death. The teacher of **Elijah**, he was a master of the esoteric **Torah**(J. Eruv. 5:1; Sanh. 102a; Mid. Teh. 5:8). Long after death, this biblical figure reappears in mystical testimonies. In the **Zohar** , his **Soul** undergoes a tikkun , a restoration, through the actions of Shimon bar Yochai (Zohar I:32a). Centuries after that, he reappears as the **maggid**, the spirit guide to the Baal Shem Tov (*Toldot Yaakov Yosef* 156a; *ShB*).[1]

1. G. Nigal, "The Rabbi and Teacher of the Baal Shem Tov," *Sinai* 79 (1976): 150–159.

Ahimaaz, Megillat or Sefer: *SEE* YUHASIN, SEFER.

Ahimaaz ben Paltiel: Adventurer and **wunder-rabbi** (Italian, ca. 11th century). His magical deeds and the deeds of his family are recorded in **Sefer Yuhasin**.

Aish M'tzaref: "Fire of the Refiner." A 16th-century tractate on **Alchemy** and **Kabbalah**.

Akatriel-YaH: (אכתראליה). "Crown of God-Yah." Super-angelic figure mentioned in **Talmud** tractate Berachot 7a–b. In this passage, he is seen sitting on the **Throne of Glory** and the voice of God speaks through him:

> It was taught as Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha says: "I once entered the innermost part of the Temple to offer incense and saw Akatriel-YaH, seated upon a high and exalted throne. God said to me: 'Ishmael, My son, bless Me!' I replied: 'May it be Your will that Your compassion overcome Your anger. May Your compassion prevail over Your other attributes. May You deal with Your children compassionately. May You not judge us solely with strict justice!' And God nodded to me." (Ber. 7a)

This enigmatic passage, which parallels the prophetic call of **Isaiah** (Isa. 6:1–13) has been subject to much interpretation; some scholars regard Akatriel-YaH to be yet another name for **Metatron**, while others theorize that perhaps Akatriel is a personification of God's **glory**. Extra-Talmudic texts only deepen the confusion.[1] In his *Sod ha-Yichud*, Eleazar of Worms alternately calls him "the Glory" and "the **Angel** that changes to many forms." The confusing nature of this entity is also discussed, without resolution, in the commentary to Berachot 7b in *Otzar ha-Geonim*. Later **Kabbalah** equates him with Malchut, the lowest of the **sefirot**. One angel-adjuring text includes Akatriel in a list of seven angels. On the other hand, a Cairo Geniza fragment clearly regards Akatriel-YaH to be a name of God.[2] *SEE* MALACH ADONAI.

1. Abrams, "From Divine Shape to Angelic Being," 46–63.
2. E. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 261–262.

Akiba (or Akiva) ben Joseph: Talmudic Sage, biblical exegete and mystic (ca. 1st–2nd century). He is arguably the most celebrated figure in the **Talmud**, and a seminal figure in the development of Jewish **mysticism**, giving his special imprimatur to the Song of Songs as the Jewish esoteric text, par excellent. He was the only one of the **four Sages** who entered **Pardes** and returned unscathed.

His **Prayers** were credited with ending a drought. He encountered a **ghost** and subsequently exorcised it by teaching the dead man's son the daily liturgy; this is credited by some with establishing the tradition of reciting **Kaddish** for the dead (*Seder Eliyahu Zuta*). As one of the ten martyrs, his willingness to die for the sake of God's honor prevented God from undoing **Creation** (*Midrash Eleh Ezkarah*). His name becomes associated with a variety of mystical practices (*Hechalot Rabbati; Hechalot Zuta*) and magical (*Havdalah de-Rabbi Akiba*).

Akkum: (עכום/*Akkum*). An acronym formed from the words ***O**ved **K**ochavim **U'M**azilim* "worshipper of stars and constellations." As such, it serves as a standard Talmudic term for a Pagan. Some Christians claimed it stood for ***O**ved **K**ristos **U'M**iriam*, "worshipper of Christ and Mary" (highly improbable, since it involves conflating Greek and **Hebrew**) and that all negative references to Pagans found in the **Talmud** were actually directed at **Christianity**, a belief that resulted in widespread Christian censorship of the Talmud in Europe.[1]

1. Singer, *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, 312.

Akrav: (אקרב). "Scorpion." The **zodiac** sign for the month of Cheshvan. This is the weakest of the signs, a **water** sign, and it is associated with the forces of decay, melancholy, and disorder. It is the month during which **the Flood** occurred and the Matriarch Rachel died.[1]

1. Erlanger, *Signs of the Times*, 145–58.

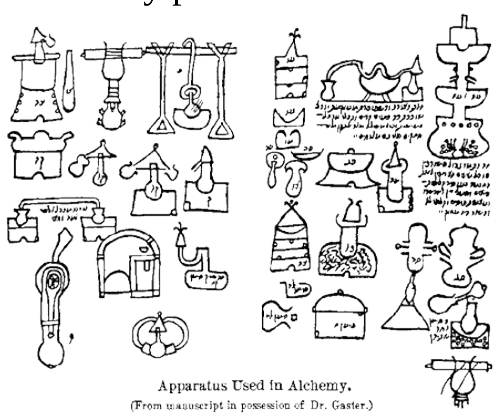
Alchemy: (אלכימיה). The Hermetic tradition, one part theosophy, one part **astrology**, and one part experimental science, was first expounded in writings attributed to the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus. Emerging in late antiquity, alchemy was a profoundly spiritual pursuit, a quest to uncover the potential for transformation of the natural order through the study of transformation in certain iconic natural substances—**metals**. Some alchemists even envisioned their ritualistic chemistry as a kind of sacrificial rite.[1]

Alchemy has been associated with Jews since antiquity. **Moses** is credited with being the teacher of Hermes himself, but this may also represent a conflation of the biblical Moses with the figure of Moses of Alexandra, an Egyptian-Jewish alchemist of antiquity. Some traditions credit the **Patriarchs** with transmitting alchemical knowledge (along with the **philosopher's stone**) that was learned from **Adam**. Bezalel, the builder of the **Mishkan** (Ex. 31:1–5), is said to have been an alchemist. Late traditions associate David and **Solomon** with the Hermetic arts, based on biblical accounts of how David produced massive

amounts of **gold**, and gave Solomon stones, assumed by later readers to be philosopher's stones (1 Chr. 22:14). Other biblical figures, such as **Elijah** and **Isaiah**, were claimed as alchemists, on the most tenuous textual evidence. Ancient alchemists even interpreted the sacrifices made in Solomon's **Temple** as nascent alchemical rituals.

Zosimos, a 5th-century Greek writer, claimed Jews learned the "sacred craft" and the "power of gold" from the Egyptians while in slavery, and they spread the practice of alchemy from then on. By far the most important and influential historical Jewish alchemist of ancient times is Maria Hebraea.

Medieval alchemists, both Jewish and gentile, frequently claimed occult knowledge of **Kabbalah**. The **Zohar** of Moses de Leon and the writings of Abraham Abulafia show a familiarity with alchemy. Directions for the making of gold appear in several Kabbalistic works, and Jewish scholars debated whether such transformations were actually possible.



Alchemical instruments from a Hebrew manuscript

Because Kabbalah was so widely applied by Christian alchemists to their work, by the dawn of the modern era alchemy and Jews were uniquely linked, though this appears to be more perception than reality. So ingrained was this perception that, in order to give their ideas more gravitas, a number of treatises on alchemy were evidently published by non-Jews using Jewish pseudonyms.

Actual Jewish practitioners include Jacob Aranicus (French, ca. 13th century), **Isaac and John Isaac Hollander** (Dutch, ca. 15th century), Mordecai Modena (Italian, ca. 16th century) and Samuel de Falk (English, ca. 18th century). Even Baruch Spinoza expressed an interest in it. Though there are hundreds of references to alchemy that appear in Jewish texts across the centuries, dedicated works on the subject, in a Jewish language, are rare. Moreover, no indisputably

original works of **Hebrew** language alchemical texts have survived to the present.

1. N. Janowitz, *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, OH: Littmann Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 109–22; also see Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists*.

Alef: (א). The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, it is a silent letter, taking on the sound value of whatever vowel is assigned to it. In **gematria**, it has the numeric value of one.

It is the first letter of the first word in the **Ten Commandments**. One tradition claims this silent *alef* was the only sound actually pronounced by God at **Mount Sinai**, but even that "silent sound" was too much for the mortal listeners, who were slain by the power of God's voice and had to be revived with angelic kisses (S of S R. 5:16). Its very shape is made from the fusion of other letters, two yuds and a vav, whose combined numeric value is twenty-six, the same value of the **Tetragrammaton**. Alef is therefore a symbol of God's utter unity and God's mystery. In the writings of Moses Cordovero, alef flows from **Keter**, the highest of the sefirotic **emanations** .[1] *SEE* HEBREW AND HEBREW ALPHABET .

1. M. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet* (New York: Mesorah, 1983), 43–54.

Alef-Bet of ben Sira: (אתיות בן שרח/*Otiyyot ben Sira*). Also called "Pseudo ben Sira," it is a controversial satirical **Midrash** composed in the Middle Ages arranged in acrostic style: its twenty-two sections to mirror the twenty-two letters of the alphabet. Each begins with a proverb, and then launches into a series of midrashic interpretations. According to this book, Joshua ben Sira was both the child and grandchild of the **Prophet Jeremiah**. This is possible because a gang of villains forced Jeremiah to masturbate in a pool and his **semen** later entered into his daughter as she bathed. The resulting child is not only a prodigy, but born with a full set of teeth. The rest of the narrative about ben Sira's life continues on in a similar insouciant tone. For example, the reader is treated to a treatise on farting, and Ben Sira cures the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar of a flatulent malady: she farts a thousand times an hour.

The whole book satirizes biblical figures, **Jesus**, and even God. Parts of the book were so offensive that even the scribes who took the time to copy it felt the need to censor it. Its most imortant passage is its unique version of the **Lilith** legend, with its innovative Midrash establishing her as the first wife of **Adam**. In the context of this work it is clearly meant as yet another parody on traditional Judaism. There are many manuscripts, yet it is rarely cited by other traditional commentaries and interpreters. Yet since its inclusion in printed 16th–19th-

century anthologies of Midrashim, it has come to be regarded as a legitimate part of Jewish esoteric lore.[1]

1. Dan, *The 'Unique Cherub' Circle*, 16–29.

Alef-Bet of Rabbi Akiba: (אתיות רבי עקיבה/*Otiyyot de Rabbi Akiba*). A collection of Merkavah teachings built around the study of the **Hebrew** alphabet, it includes elements of Shi'ur Qomah, as well as many fabulous tales of anthropomorphized letters. Compiled sometime between the 7th and 10th centuries CE, the earliest version includes some magical traditions as well. It was ridiculed by some medieval scholars for gross anthropomorphism regarding God, and later recensions are bowdlerized, with the most controversial material being edited out.

Aleinu: (עלינו). This **Prayer** of Jewish liturgy, which makes one of its earliest appearances in the Hechalot text Ma'aseh Merkavah,[1] is said to be effective against spirit **possession** if recited seven times, forward and backward (*Zanfat Pa'aneah*). Controversy seems to attach itself to this prayer. It was added to the service for the monthly blessing of the **moon** to discourage people from thinking Jews are worshipping celestial objects (*Mishnah Berurah*). From about the 15th to 19th centuries, Jews in some communities would spit upon reciting the word *v'reik (*"and emptiness") when it appeared in the hymn. Like the practice described above, this was likely an apotropaic act of protection against the evil forces that would be attracted by such negative language, but it was widely perceived by Christian authorities as an insulting gesture directed at **Jesus** (using **gematria**, the word has the same numeric value—316—as *Yeshu*). This accusation persisted even after it was repeatedly pointed out that the phrasing is lifted directly from the book of Isaiah. Rabbis eventually extinguished this folk practice because of the controversy. On a more positive note, another phrase in the prayer, *l'takein ha-olam (*"to rectify the world") mirrors, and may have even helped inspire, the kabbalistic doctrine of **Tikkun** . *SEE* INCANTATIONS, SPELLS, AND ADJURATIONS; REVERSAL.

1. G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 2012), 105–6.

Alemanno, Johannan: Magician and Kabbalist (Italian, ca. 15th century). Alemanno was a tutor to Pico Della Mirandola, the Renaissance-era Christian Qabbalist.

Alexander the Great: When Alexander (356–323 BCE) came to **Jerusalem** during his conquests, Simon the Righteous came out to meet him and Alexander bowed down to him, to the amazement of his servants. Alexander told them that a vision of Simon's image appeared to him in battle and made him victorious. Alexander also saw God's name written on Simon's diadem, remembered it, and thus introduced the gentiles to the **Tetragrammaton**, God's name of power (*Ant*. 6:317–39; Yoma 69a).

Alitha: (אליתה). A fantastic substance, or beast, capable of extinguishing any fire. The generation of **the Flood** claimed to be able to combat God's fiery wrath with this phenomenon, not realizing God had other **weapons** in his arsenal (Sanh. 108b; MhG).

Alkabetz, Solomon: Mystical poet (Turkish, ca. 16th century). Author of the mystical liturgical poem Lecha Dodi, Alkabetz was a spiritual practitioner of gerushin, a mystical soul-projection technique achieved by **incubation** on the graves of saintly individuals. He also introduced the ritual-spiritual drama of meditative walking outdoors, dressed as a groom, on the eve of Shabbat to "receive" the "Bride of Shabbat," the personified Shabbat.

Allegory: (משל). Today we assume the proper way to read Scripture is for its plain (and/or historical) meaning. This way of reading started to appear in the Middle Ages and accelerated with the Christian Reformation. While rarely acknowledged, however, the plain sense of Scripture often presents problems, to the point where modern exponents of the "religious" reading of the **Bible** are forced to elide over large sections of material. Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon or Canticles) is the signal example. The plain meaning is wholly secular. It's a collection of ancient **love** poems, perhaps **Wedding** poems. This biblical book never mentions God, it teaches no ethics, and it contains no metaphysics beyond the romantic assertion that "love is stronger than death." Even the most literal-minded person of faith today is forced to immediately abandon the obvious meaning when it comes to the Song of Songs.

In doing so, the readers revert to the indispensable ancient/medieval strategy of "allegorical" reading, first fully developed by the Greco-Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria and embraced by the early church. In order to uncover useful spiritual ideas, allegory is the preferred hermeneutic strategy. The book was probably included in the canon in the first place only because the Rabbis

were persuaded that reading it allegorically as the love between Israel and God is the only real meaning.

For most of its interpretive history, in fact, the entire Hebrew Bible has been treated as a cryptic text. The Jewish allegorical assumption has been that all passages operate on (at least) two levels of meaning, the *niglah* and the *nistar* ("the revealed" and "the concealed"). And Song of Songs was held to be the most esoteric of all the canon, because it has no niglah, only nistar. Thus the medieval Jewish commentator ibn Kaspi wrote:

> Solomon, *alav hashalom* ["may he rest in peace"] composed three books which we possess, corresponding to three types of discourse … entirely open and literal … entirely hidden, with nothing revealed … the third has both hidden and revealed … Song of Songs is the second type. … (Commentary to Song of Songs) [1]

The challenge of the allegorical reading, then, is that once it is claimed one holds the key to unlock the **secret** treasure (i.e., "It's about God and Israel" or "God and the **Soul**") then the interpreter has to explain the parabolic meaning of all the figures, symbols, or imagery—what do the "garden," "**nut**," or "**breasts**" refer to? In Judaism, this has led to a vast array of interpretive strategies and conclusions. *SEE* MIDRASH; PARDES.

1. A. Berlin, *Biblical Poetry Through Medieval Jewish Eyes* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 105.

Almoli, Solomon ben Jacob: Oneiromancer (Turkish, ca. 16th century). He is author of Pitron Chalomot, "The Interpretation of Dreams," the most comprehensive text on oneiromancy written by a Jew. *SEE* Dream.

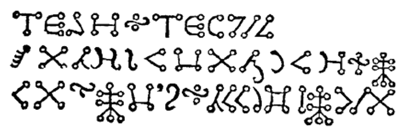
Almonds: (שקד/*Shaked*). With their fruit encased in a shell and their eyelike shape, almonds are a symbol of concealed **wisdom** and divine favor. They seem particularly linked to the **priesthood**. The **oil** cups on the **menorah** were almond shaped (Ex. 26). Aaron's rod was made of almond wood and sprouted blossoms during his **ordeal** with other contenders for the High Priesthood (Num. 17). Almonds are eaten in order to ward off the **evil eye**.

Almudhab: Arabic, "The Golden [One]." The **demon** that governs the first day of the week (Sunday). He may be summoned by an adept and forced to exercise his powers over **love** and friendship (*Tzefunei Tzioni*). This demon is derived from Islamic tradition.[1]

1. B. Huss,“Demonology and Magic in the Writings of R. Menachem Ziyyoni,” *Kabbalah* 10 (2004): 55–72.

Alphabet, Hebrew: (אלף בית). *SEE* HEBREW AND HEBREW ALPHABET.

Alphabet, Magical: A set of symbols consisting of lines terminating in **circles** that was a popular feature in ancient and medieval magical inscriptions and **amulets**. Scholars sometimes refer to these symbols as “**Angel** script,” “sigils,” or *brillenbuchstaben* (“eye-glass” symbols) because the circles at the ends of the characters resemble monocles. The number of magical **signs** found on Hebrew magical texts far exceeds the twenty-two letters of the **Hebrew alphabet**, so evidently talisman makers assigned their own phonetic or hieroglyphic values to these symbols. Consequently, no definitive system for their translation or interpretation is available to us.[1]



Magical alphabet from Sefer Raziel

The methodology for their application is also somewhat of a mystery, though one 14th-century text, *Tzefunei Tziyyoni* (p. 70), describes them as seals which high angels use to subordinate om God had made simultaneously with him. When they argued, she flew off to become the queen of **demons** and compel them to serve God. The well-prepared adept may likewise use them to bend demons to the service of man.

1. J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 140–42.

Alroy, David: False **Messiah** (Iraqi, ca. 12th century). Alroy claimed to be the Messiah ben David and declared war against the Seljuk Sultan. He was an accomplished sorcerer, performing many wonders for his followers, and even once escaping captivity by magical means. According to one legend, he met his end by telling his followers to decapitate him so that he could be resurrected. The first phase of his plan worked perfectly (Benjamin of Tedula; *Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah*).

Altar: (מזבח/*Mizbei’ach*). A surface used for **sacrifices**, usually elevated upon a **pillar** of stone(s). Throughout the Hebrew **Bible**, altars are erected at the sites of divine appearances or revelations (Gen. 15, 22, 28), which were considered numinous places from that time forward. The presence of an altar therefore

constituted a shrine. In later Jewish thought, the altar represents a harmonizing principle between God and humanity.

Israelite altars were made of a pillar of unhewn stones supporting a square platform with "**horns**," or projections rising at each corner (Ex. 22, 29). Israelite practice featured two different kinds of altars, one for the animal and meal offerings, and another for the burning of **incense**.

The word itself, *Mizbei'ach*, is regarded to be an acronym for ***M****ehila*, ***Z****achut*, ***B****erachah*, ***Ch****ayyim* ("forgiveness, merit, blessing, and life").

Once found on innumerable high places across the land, such altars disappeared when all sacrifice was centralized in **Jerusalem** as a reform measure to curb **idolatry** and syncretistic practices. Licit sacrifices in the cult of the God of Israel, according to the Bible, included incense, kosher **animals**, meal, **oil**, **salt**, and even **water**.

There is evidence that Jews living far from their homeland erected altars to the God of Israel, despite the prohibitions stipulated in the Bible. For example, the Jewish garrison in Elephantine, Egypt, had one, but also engaged in syncretistic worship of local deities alongside the God of Israel. There is also an episode reported in **Talmud** in which a sacrifice was made even without an altar (Zev. 116b). Over time this kind of practice was extinguished and anything even remotely resembling an altar in form or function was purged from Judaism. Thus any use of an altar from that period forward only occurs in occult or illicit rituals. The use of such an unsanctioned altar is mentioned, for example, in **Sefer ha-Razim**.

In the absence of the cult, the Rabbis declared the kitchen table (i.e., the Jewish home) to be the "small altar" of God.

Aluka: (עלוקה). "Leech." This is a traditional **Hebrew** term for a **vampire**. Some texts also identify it as a name for one of the seven compartments of **Gehenna** (*Gedulat Moshe* 41; *SCh*).

Amalek: The tribal and metaphysical nemesis of **Israel**. Deuteronomy commands Israel to "blot out" Amalek—originally identified in the **Bible** as a tribal people who massacred vulnerable Israelites coming up from Egyptian slavery—from under **Heaven**, for God "will be at war with Amalek throughout the ages" (Ex. 17, 18; Deut. 25). The later failure of **Saul** to kill Agag, the King of the Amalekites, alienates God from him.

Because of Saul's error, descendants of the Amalekites continue to threaten Israel across the ages. **Haman** was a descendant of Agag. The Romans were also

identified as children of Amalek. Since rabbinic times, it has been idiomatic to describe any implacable enemy of the Jews as “Amalek” (*Ant.* 11; Ex. R. 26; PdRK 27). In some Kabbalistic thought, “Amalek” becomes an idiom for impure things, including flaws within the believer. I. A. Kook, for example, considers “Amalek” any ungodly thing in the world, and that such things can only be overcome by **love** (*Middot ha-Rayah*).

Amazarak: This **fallen angel** taught **sorcery** to humanity (I Enoch 8).

Amemnar: Sorceress mentioned in **Talmud** (Pes. 110).

Ammi: Talmudic Sage, folk healer, and diviner (ca. 3rd century). His remedies appear in Horayot 12a and Avodah Zarah 28a–b.

Ammon of No: (אמון נא). Variations of this name appear in lists of **fallen angels** and om God had made simultaneously with him. When they argued, she flew off to become the queen of **demons** across Jewish literature. He is the angel/demon governing **Alchemy**, **dreams**, and **Christianity**.[1] *SEE* REINA, JOSEPH DELLA.

1. A. Schwarz, *Kabbalah and Alchemy: An Essay on Common Archetypes* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2000), 108.

Amtachat Binyamin, Sefer: An 18th-century compilation of **segulot**, formulae for making **amulets**, and medicinal **prayers** and treatments, composed by the **Baal Shem Binyamin Binush**.

Amulet: (קמיע‘/*Kamia*). An amulet or a charm is an object or a device, usually with writing on it, which provides protection against harm, whether of natural or supernatural origin. The use of amulets and charms is virtually universal across human cultures and across time, and Jews are no exception. Jewish amulets have been used to ward off a variety of ills: **disease**, mishap, dangerous animals, **sorcery**, and/or malevolent spirits. They can also serve as **love** charms. They have been particularly used by Jews to induce **fertility**, protect **women** during pregnancy, and to shield newborn infants. For many Jews, amulets signified human empowerment in the face of unseen and malevolent forces in the world.[1]

Amulets take many forms throughout the different periods of Jewish history. The use of amulets to ward off evil spirits and/or disease was pervasive in the cultures that surrounded ancient **Israel**, and examples of Canaanite, Phoenician, Assyrian, and Egyptian origin have been recovered. The use of amulets by biblical Israelites is specifically criticized in Isaiah 3:18–20. It is unclear from the context whether amulets qua amulets are being condemned, or whether they

are merely included in a list of vanities and luxuries associated with women. Only two physical examples of amulets from the biblical era have been uncovered so far. The first is a tomb inscription found at Khibet el Qom dating to the 8th century BCE asking for the protection of YHVH and his **Asherah**. The second is also a tomb artifact, but this one consisting of two rolled-up copper plates inscribed with the Priestly Blessing (Num. 6:24–25) found at Ketef Hinnom and dating from the 7th century.[2]

Evidence for the use of amulets grows dramatically post-biblically. It is 2 *Maccabees* 12:40 that reports disapprovingly of slain Jewish warriors found wearing amulets with foreign gods inscribed on them. Again, it is unclear whether the author objects to talismans in general or to just these syncretistic examples. Of course, the **tefillin** worn by Jews on the head and arm to fulfill the **commandment** (Deut. 6:8) are regarded as having talismanic properties by some Jews, though that is not their formal function. The Latin word for *tefillin*, *phylactery* ("safeguard") highlights this perception. Likewise, in some circles the **mezuzah** put on the doorpost of Jewish homes is also regarded as a charm against misfortune.

The Sages are largely at ease with the use of amulets, saying that "anything that effects **Healing** is not considered witchcraft" (Shab. 67a), and discuss their use to protect people (particularly **children**), animals, and property. Amulets were considered a regular part of the medical response to illness and the Sages speak of experienced **kamia** makers who have a proven track record of making efficacious amulets. They also discuss the criteria for judging a good medical amulet (Shab. 61b; Yoma 84a). They do, however, place limits on the sanctity with which amulets may be treated, even ones with God's name inscribed on them (Shab. 115b). The Babylonian **Talmud** distinguishes between written amulets and folk amulets, the latter being called *kamia shel ikrin* and being made from roots (rather like a medicine bag). We have a number of written metallic amulets, mostly in Aramaic, from that era. Features of these charms include biblical phrases, **names of God**, and strings of *nomina barbara*, or nonsense words and phrases. **Atbash** (letter substitution) codes are sometimes used. Often foreign loan words appear and, on occasion, unpronounceable divine and angelic names. Diagrams, **magical alphabets**, and crude illustrations are common but not constant features. Many written amulets were rolled up and inserted in **metal** tubes, the same way a mezuzah is protected and displayed (Sanh. 63b; Pes. 111a–b).

Of the sample of amulets from late antiquity that have been found, perhaps the most intriguing are **incantation bowls**: pottery dishes painted with **incantations** and then buried under the doorpost of a house to trap underworld spirits who attempt to enter.[3]

Beginning in the Middle Ages, amulets appear that are designed to protect against the *ayin ha-ra*, the **evil eye**. Many more physical examples of amulets from the medieval period have survived, giving us a clearer picture of the forms, as well as the logic behind them. Many examples of silver, lead, and pewter amulets have come down to us, so **metal** is apparently a preferred material for amulet making, though it may also be that metal's durability means more examples of these types of charms have survived.[4]

Despite the ridicule of a few rationalists like **Maimonides**, amulet making was considered a worthy religious undertaking by most Jews. Eleazar of Worms and Moses Zacuto were both advocates for them. Sefer Chasidim even permits the limited use of amulets made by non-Jews (*SCh* 247, 1114). Quite a number of amulet recipe books have survived, but by far the most influential was Sefer **Raziel**, which describes their manufacture in detail and prescribes specific times on certain days when engraving amulets will make them potent. Innumerable Jewish amulets have been preserved that were based on the models found in the 1701 printed version.



Amulet against Lilith from Sefer Raziel

Most controversies about the use of amulets arose not over their effectiveness, but about whether individuals were selling amulets with false claims or whether certain amulet designs may have originated in heretical circles, such as that of the false **Messiah**, Shabbatai Tzvi.

With the advent of modern printing and stamping techniques, amulets have been mass-produced in both metal and paper as pendants, small sheets, or broadsides. The most famous of these is the Middle Eastern tradition of the **Shivitti** talisman, using the words from Psalm 16:8 “I have placed the Eternal always before me.” Select amulet makers, like Chayyim Azulai (ca. 18th century), became celebrated figures. The Chasidic community has been very enthusiastic about their use from the very beginnings of their movement (*ShB* 23, 107, 187), which actually may have dampened the enthusiasm for amulets in the Orthodox community at large because of their distaste for all things Chasidic.

Even today, amulets enjoy widespread use in some traditional Jewish circles, especially among the Chasidic, Asian, and North African communities. More modern amulet makers will often use the same kind of animal skin parchment and ink that is used in making a Sefer Torah. These modern amulets, sometimes called **segulot**, feature either verses from Scripture with perceived protective properties, or **permutations** of the names of God. Often these words and anagrams are arranged in **magic squares**, **circles**, **hexagrams**, and other enclosed patterns (either to block out or to trap the malevolent forces) to enhance their power. These also have mathematical associations, being grouped in threes, nines, or other significant **numbers**.

Popular images appearing on amulets include the protective **hand** or **chamsa**, **menorahs**, **fish**, and **Angels**. A few examples even have crude pictures of the very demonic forces the amulet is meant to ward off. One suspects that the primitive quality of these demonic illustrations is deliberate—yet another way of degrading the power of the evil spirits—because many amulets are designed with attention given to aesthetics and are quite beautiful.

Beyond the materials used, there are rituals of power that must be observed when creating an amulet. Thus the maker will subject himself to a period of **purification**, usually three days, following the example of the Israelites who purified themselves for three days prior to receiving the Torah. Amulet-making manuals list **Prayers** and incantations that must be recited while constructing the kamia, along with those spells that will be written on it.

Certain days and times are better for making amulets, and these are carefully observed (*Sefer Raziel*). *SEE* ANGEL AND ANGELOLOGY; BIRTH; CIRCLE; HEALING; INCANTATIONS, SPELLS, AND ADJURATIONS; MAGEN, DAVID; MAGIC SQUARE.

1. M. Klein, *A Time to Be Born* (New York, Jewish Publication Society, 1999), 37–38, 151–52.

2. A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1992), 522–26.

3. Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985), 15–20.

4. C. Roth, ed., *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 907–14.

Ana B'choach: (אנא בכח). A mystical **Prayer** used in both liturgical and theurgic contexts. Supposedly the composition of a 2nd-century sage, R. Nechunyiah, it is more likely a 13th–14th-century work. This prayer incorporates all the signal elements that mark all mystical thought—the idea of esoteric knowledge (God in the prayer is called *Yodeia taalumot*, "Knower of **secrets**"), mathematical symmetry (seven lines of six **Hebrew** words each), but most of all here, an allusion to secret divine names: 6 x 7 = 42, the 42-letter name of God that can be constructed from the opening verses of Genesis and is, therefore, the key to **Creation**. This poem is an **acrostic**, but not of the *alef-bet* variety common to many **psalms** and mystical poems. This is an acrostic formed from those 42 letters of God's name. So this is a prime example of Kabbalistic name **mysticism**:

> By the great strength or Your right hand [God's "right hand" is an emblem of salvation. (Ex. 15:6)], release the bound [a petition that frequently appears in Jewish prayer].
> Accept your people's song, elevate and purify us, O Awesome One.
> Mighty One, those who strive for Your Unification [of the male and female polarities of the Pleroma (Zech. 14:9)], guard them as the pupil of an eye.
> Bless them, purify them, pity them, may your righteousness reward them.
> Mighty Holy One, in goodness lead your congregation.
> Unique Exalted One, turn to your people who recall Your holiness.
> Accept our petitions, and hear our cries, O Knower of Secrets.
> Blessed be the reputation of His noble kingdom for all eternity.

Ultimately, the semantic meaning of this prayer is secondary to the talismanic performance of the concealed/revealed name, invoking its power to heal the fractures in creation and restore life to its fullness at every level by simply reciting it. The Ana B'choach is often incorporated into **amulets**.

Anafiel: (ענפיאל). "Bough of God." A princely **Angel** who appears in Merkavah literature (III Enoch 6, 18; *Hechalot Rabbati*; Zohar I:108b). He guards the heavenly **palace** of **Zebul**, or in other sources, Aravot, and was instrumental in assisting God with the process of **Creation**:

> Why is his name Anafiel? Because of the branches of his crown of crowns, this is laid upon his head, which conceals and covers all the chambers of the palace of the *arevot raqia* like the Maker of Creation. What [is special about] the Maker of Creation? Scripture teaches in reference to Him: His majesty covers the sky [Hab. 3:3], so does this apply to the prince Anafiel, who is named after the name of his master.[1]

In **Sefer Iyyun**, he emanates seven **serafim**. He wears a **crown** and holds the "signet **ring**" of God (serves as God's vizier). He is described as the "the head above all limbs" (Zohar III:289b). His status resembles that of **Metatron** in other texts, and in III Enoch it is Anafiel that administers the pulsa denura punishment upon Metatron. Joseph Dan argues they were once two names for the same entity.[2]

1. P. Schafer, *The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), 31.

2. J. Dan, "Anafiel, Metatron, and the Creator," *Tarbiz* 52, (1982): 447–57.

Anagram: (הפוך). *SEE* ABBREVIATIONS; HAFUCH; NOTARIKON; TEMURAH; TZERUF/Tzerufim.

Anak, Anakim: Human-angelic offspring, a race of **giants** related to the Nefilim (Deut. 2:12–21), especially associated with the city of Hebron (Josh. 14:15). They resettled in Philistine territory after the Israelite conquest, accounting for **Goliath** and his brother (Josh. 11:22). According to the **Midrash**, they received their name from the jewelry they heaped around their *anakim (*"necks") (Gen. R. 26). Three Anakim brothers, Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, where the giants who terrified the Israelite spies in Numbers 17 and meet their comeuppance in Joshua 15:14.

Ancestors: (אבות ואמהות). The belief in the continuing presence of the dead and their influence on the living has been, in different forms, a feature of Jewish belief from earliest times. This has led to venerating the ancestral dead, and even cults dedicated to them. The **Bible** itself refers to such practices as ensuring the dead are gathered together with the clan on ancestral land (Gen. 50:24–25), caring for the dead spirits (Deut. 26:14; Isa. 57:6), and consulting them for occult knowledge (Deut. 18:11; Isa. 8:19–22, 19:3; 1 Sam. 28:3–25).

It is clear that ancient Israel venerated its dead (Deut. 10:15). Many scholars also believe that the Children of Israel inherited a cult of the ancestral dead, possibly even deified dead, from their Semitic milieu and that it remained a

popular belief among Israelites despite the opposition of the prophets. References in the Bible to the *ob* (a familiar spirit apparently derived from the same **Hebrew** root as "father") have been considered part of that covert tradition. Other scholars argue that a cult of the beneficent dead was introduced by influence of the Assyrians, who were obsessed with **necromancy**, in the 8th through 7th centuries BCE. From this perspective, all seemingly earlier references found in the Bible are actually anachronisms introduced by later editors.[1] Contrary to the proscription of the **Torah**, the only clear example of a biblical figure who consulted the ancestral dead for guidance is that of **Saul** summoning the dead spirit of the prophet **Samuel** (1 Sam. 28:4–25). The account clearly illustrates that the author of Samuel believed necromancy was real, though the end results for Saul were personally disappointing.

With the prophetic verse Jeremiah 31:15–16 serving as *locus classicus*, "A cry is heard in Ramah, wailing, bitter **weeping**, **Rachel** weeps for her children, she refuses to be comforted …" The Sages of Talmudic times believed that their ancestors were aware of what transpired on earth and would plead before God on behalf of their descendants (Tan. 16a; Men. 53b). Midrash Lamentations Rabbah includes a description of biblical figures like **Abraham**, **Moses**, and Rachel interceding before the Divine Throne when God's **judgment** is being pronounced against Israel (Lam. R. 24). They would even combat evil spirits attacking Israel (Ex. R. 41.7, 44:8; Tanh. Ki Tissa 20, PdRE 45; and Deut. R. 3.11).

In time, this idea of the positive influence of the beneficent dead expanded into the doctrine of zechut avot (the merit of the ancestors), which became canonized in the daily liturgy with the Avot **Prayer** ("You remember the faithfulness of our ancestors and therefore bring redemption to their children's children …"). Sefer Chasidim describes how the dead pray for the living (452). As late as the **Zohar**, we find the theme of being reunified with one's relatives is still a prominent expectation of the afterlife (*Va-yehi* 218b). In later **Kabbalah**, there is a shift from veneration of biological ancestors to "**Soul**" ancestors.

Under the influence of Christian and Muslim saint veneration, the doctrine of *zechut avot* eventually evolved into a more direct veneration of the meritorious dead, with practices such as praying to them for their **intercession** in personal matters. The purported graves of many luminaries—biblical (Rachel's tomb in Bethlehem), rabbinic (Simon bar Yochai in Meron), Medieval (Meir ha-Baal Nes in Tiberias), and modern (Nachman of Bratzlav)—have become the focus of pilgrimages and prayers for divine intervention among the ultra-Orthodox. Even

the tombs of Jews who would have scoffed at such behavior, like **Maimonides**, have become destinations for Jewish pilgrims and supplicants.

The custom of graveside veneration endures and thrives to this day in some sects of Judaism, and is extended even to such 20th-century figures as the Moroccan faith healer **Baba Sali** and the seventh **CHaBaD** rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson. *SEE* DEATH; GHOST; IBBUR; Reincarnation; RIGHTEOUS, THE.

1. B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition* (Lake Geneva: Eisenbraun, 1996), 132–263.

Ancient Holy One or Ancient of Days: (עתיק יומין/*Atik Yomin*, also *Atik Kadisha; Atik ha-Atika*). Another idiom for God, based on Daniel 7:9. In **Talmud**, it is that aspect of God that will reveal esoteric teachings to the wise (Pes. 119a; Ber. 17a), but it is also the redemptive aspect of deity (*Likkutai MoHaRan* I:21). In the **Zohar** this term is used to specifically refer to the most hidden aspect of God, either Ein Sof or **Keter** (III:130a–b; III:136b). *SEE* PARTZUFIM.

Androgyny: According to the rabbinic interpretation of Genesis 1:27, the first human, Adam Kadmon, was created androgynous, with both male and female aspects. Noting that the **Torah** has no punctuation, the Rabbis parse the verse this way: "And God created man in His image, in the image of God he created him male and female." Thus man was truly "one," most closely resembling God. Later, God decided that man needed to be bi-sexual and more like the other creatures. Only then did God divide Adam into two persons, one male and one female:

> "You have formed me before and behind" [Ps. 139:5] … R. Jeremiah b. Leazar said: When the Blessed Holy One created the first *adam*, He created it with both male and female sexual organs, as it is written, "Male and female He created them, and He called their name '*adam*,' " [Gen. 5:2]. R. Samuel b. Nahmani said, "When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the first '*adam*,' He created him with two faces, then split him and made him two backs—a back for each side." [Gen. R. 8:1; Ber. 61a]

When people enter into a fit **marriage**, the complete, primeval human is reconstituted through the union (Yev. 63b; Gen. R. 17:2; Zohar I:85b). Though this **myth** strikes us today as odd, it conveys the idea that God conceived humanity in essential gender equality, regardless of historical social realities.

Angel and Angelology: (מלאך/*Malach*). In Judaism, an angel is a spiritual entity in the service of God. Angels play a prominent role in Jewish thought throughout

the centuries, though the concept has been subject to widely—at times wildly—different interpretations.

A number of numinous creatures subordinate to God appear throughout the Hebrew **Bible**; the **Malach** (messenger/angel) is only one variety. Others, distinguished from angels proper, include **Irinim** (Watchers/High Angels), **Cherubim** (Mighty Ones), **Sarim** (Princes), **serafim** (Fiery Ones), **Chayyot** ([Holy] Creatures), and **Ofanim** (Wheels). Collective terms for the numinous beings serving God include *Tzeva* ("Host"), *B'nai ha-Elohim* or *B'nai Elim* ("**Sons of God**"), and *Kedoshim* ("Holy Ones"). They are constituted into an Adat El, a divine assembly (Ps. 82; Job 1). A select number of angels in the Bible (three to be precise) have names. They are **Michael**, **Gabriel**, and (assuming it's a proper name) **ha-Satan**.

Angels can come in a wondrous variety of forms, although the Bible often neglects to give any description at all (Judg. 6:11–14; Zech. 4). They appear humanoid in most biblical accounts (Num. 22) and as such are often indistinguishable from human beings (Gen. 18, 32:10–13; Josh. 5:13–15; Judg. 13:1–5), but they also may manifest themselves as pillars of **fire** and **cloud** or as a fiery bush (Ex. 14:3). The **psalms** characterize phenomena that we regard today as "natural," like lightning, as God's *melachim* (Ps. 104:4). Other divine creatures appear to be winged parts of God's throne (Isa. 6) or of the divine **chariot** (Ezek. 1). The appearance of cherubim was well enough known to be artistically rendered on the **Ark of the Covenant** (Ex. 25). Perhaps the most ambiguous creature is the Malach Adonai, an angel that may or may not be a visible manifestation of God (compare the wording of Ex. 13:21–14:19).

Biblical angels fulfill a variety of functions in the lower worlds, including conveying information to mortals (Zech. 1–4), shielding (Ex. 14), rescuing (Gen. 21), and smiting Israel's enemies. It is interesting to note that by and large, biblical angels have responsibilities but no authority. This begins to change with the biblical book of Daniel. **Daniel** includes a number of ideas about angels that are elaborated upon in post-biblical texts, including named angels and **guardian angels**. Most significant for future Jewish angelology, Daniel posits that all the **nations** of the world have their own angelic prince, that angels are arranged hierarchically, and that angels have actual, if limited, spheres of authority over mortal realms (also Deut. 32).

In Job, God grants temporary authority over **Job** to Satan (Job 1). Angels seem to have a particularly prominent role in those biblical books written by, or under the influence, of priests (Genesis, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah).

Jewish sources of the Greco-Roman period add considerable detail to the traditions of angels found in the Hebrew Scriptures (*Jubilees* 2:2; *Ben Sira* 16:26–30). We especially see the first systematic organization of biblical **host of heaven** into a hierarchy of different castes of angels governing and serving on different levels of **Heaven**. Zechariah's reference to the seven **eyes** of God (4:10), for example, is understood to refer to either seven **archangels** or the seven angel hosts in the **seven heavens** (I Enoch 61; *Testament of the Patriarchs* Levi).

We also see a "quasi-polytheistic" view of the divine order recast in monotheistic terms. Now instead of having minor gods with specific spheres of power, lists of angels appear, all subordinate to God, but each designated with their sphere of authority (III Enoch). This is accompanied by a proliferation of named angels. For the first time we hear of **Uriel**, **Raphael**, Peniel, **Metatron**, and many, many others (I Enoch*; Tobit;* IV Ez.). Angels also increasingly represent the personification of impersonal entities, the forces of **nature** (lightning, clouds, **rain**), the reification of human concepts and constructs (**childbirth**, forgetfulness, nations), or the hypostasis of divine attributes (justice, **love**, forgiveness).

There is also an awareness of an affinity between angels and mortals. Already hinted at in the Bible, it is made clearer post-biblically that the boundary between human and angelic states can be quite permeable. Elaborating on cryptic passages found in the Bible (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11), it is taught that exceptional mortals, such as **Enoch**, **Elijah**, and Serach bat Asher may be elevated to angelic status (I Enoch; Zohar I:100a, 129b; T.Z. Hakdamah 16b).

A sense of dualism, stronger than what is found in the Hebrew Scriptures, starts to find expression in late antiquity and leads to angels being divided into camps of **light** and darkness, as exemplified by the angelology in the War Scroll and the Manual of Discipline found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. The mythic allusion to the misadventures of the sons of God in Genesis 6:2 becomes the *locus classicus* for this (I Enoch from the section sometimes called the Book of the Watchers). The mythos of **fallen angel**s, central to the dualistic priestly **mysticism** of the Qumran sect, eventually becomes a major theological motif in **Christianity**, but remains largely in the background in rabbinic Judaism, exerting far less influence over subsequent Jewish angelology. It is here also we first see the idea that angels envy humanity, a theme that continues in rabbinic and medieval literature (Sanh. 88b–89a, 109a; Gen. R. 118:6). The belief that angels may be invoked and employed by human initiates, later a staple element

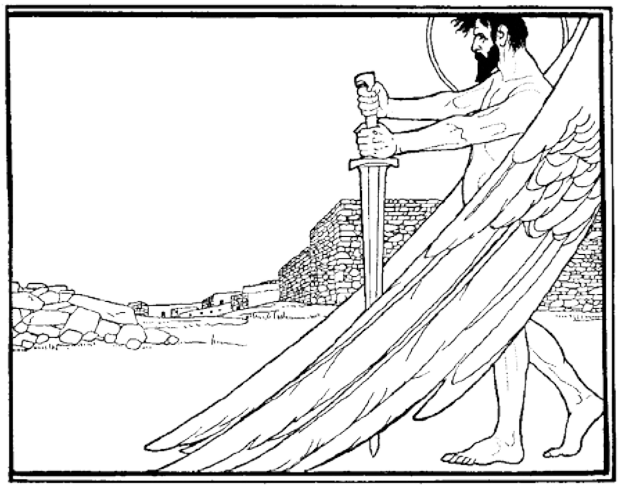
of Ma’asei Merkavah mysticism, first appears at this time (*Testament of Solomon*).

Generally speaking, rabbinic literature de-emphasizes the importance of angels when compared with their role in the priestly Qumran, apocalyptic, and mystical traditions. For the first time, the idea is suggested that angels have no **free will** (Shab. 88b; Gen. R. 48:11). But they do have intellect and an inner life; they argue and are capable of errors (Sanh. 38b; Mid. Teh. 18:13). Most angels exist to do a single task (B.M. 86b; Gen. R. 50:2) and exalted as they may be, angels are subordinate to humanity, or at least the righteous (Gen. R. 21; Sanh. 93a; Ned. 32a; Deut. R. 1).

Still, references to angels in rabbinic literature are almost as vast as the host of heaven themselves.[1] Many divine actions described in Scripture were now ascribed to various angels (Deut. R. 9; Gen R. 31:8; Sanh. 105b). Contrary to this trend, however, the **Passover** Haggadah pointedly denies that angels played any role in the pivotal event of delivering Israel from **Egypt** (ha-Maggid).

Angelic functions are revealed to be even more varied and their role in the operation of the universe even more pervasive. The figure of Mavet (**Death**) in the Bible is now identified as the *Malach ha-Mavet* (the **Angels of Death**). The Early Jewish concept of a personal angel, of **malach shareit**, **mazal**, or **memuneh**, “ministering” or “guardian” angel and an angelic “deputy,” also comes to the fore in rabbinic literature (RaSHI on Meg. 3a; Mid. Mish. 11:27; *SCh* 129, 633, 1162). The idea that the angels form a choir singing the praises of God also captures comment and speculation by the Sages (Gen. R. 78:1). While rabbinic writings offer no systematic angelology comparable to that coming out of contemporaneous Christian, mystical, and magical circles, certain parallel notions can be seen. Thus we learn in **Talmud** that **Michael**, the angelic prince over Israel, serves as High **priest** in *Yerushalyim shel malah*, the heavenly **Jerusalem** (Chag. 12b). Legends concerning the prophet-turned-angel Elijah (Ber. 4b) become one of the most commonplace angelic tales. Elijah frequently appears among mortals, bearing revelations from heaven and resolving inscrutable questions.

That all angels (and not just serafim and cherubim) have wings is first mentioned during this period (Chag. 16a; PdRE 4).



Lilien illustration of Balaam's angel

The size of angels may vary from small to cosmic (Chag. 13b). Angels also move at different speeds, depending upon their mission:

> A Tanna taught: Michael [reaches his goal] in one [flap], Gabriel in two, Elijah in four, and the angel of Death in eight. In the time of plague, however, [the Angel of Death arrives] in one. (Ber. 4b)

There is a debate as to whether angels eat, and argument driven by the question of whether they have any materiality at all (Yoma 75b). Later tradition attempts to split the difference, declaring they do eat, but not **food** of the same order as humans:

> From whence are they [angels] nourished? Rabbi Yehudah says in the name of Rabbi Isaac: "From the splendor of the Shekhinah, as it is written, 'In the light of the King's face there is life.' " (Prov. 16:15; PR 16:15)

As the tradition makes more specific claims about angels, there emerges a fundamental disagreement about the nature of angels. Some consider angels to be God's "embodied decrees," while others regard them to be elementals made of **fire**, like an Islamic *ifrit*, or from an impossible combination of fire and **water** (*SY* 1.7; S of S R. 10; J. R.H. 58; *Gedulat Moshe*). Others regard them as immaterial, disembodied intellects. Likewise, there seems to be an ongoing controversy about what, or whether, angels eat (Judg. 13; Gen. R. 48:14; B.M. 86b; Zohar I:102b).

Angelology is a major element in Merkavah mysticism. Any practitioner wishing to ascend through the **palaces** of the heavens and achieve a **vision** of the divine **glory** needed to know how to get past the angelic guardians (usually by

knowing and invoking their names) at each level (III Enoch). Perhaps even more important to this mystical tradition, angels can be summoned and brought down to earth to serve a human initiate. Many rituals and practices devoted to this end have been preserved in the **Hechalot** writings.

Starting in late antiquity, angels are increasingly related to and seen as part of the everyday life of individuals and the functioning of the world. Thus, the names of angels have protective properties and frequently appear on **amulets**, magical inscriptions, and formulae. In the bedtime ritual Kriat Sh'ma al ha-Mitah, the angels Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and **Raphael** are invoked for protection through the **night**.

Unlike the biblical writers, the Sages allow themselves to speculate on the origins of angels. They teach, for example, that angels did not pre-exist Creation, but were formed as part of the heavens on the second day (Gen. R. 1:3, 3). Another Rabbi posits that they came into existence on the fifth day, along with all "winged" and "gliding" (bird and fish) creations. Later traditions reconcile the different positions by asserting different kinds of angels came into being at different stages of Creation (Chag. 14b; PdRE 4). The **Zohar** teaches that all angels are the products of specific **sefirot**—angels of **love** emanate from **Chesed**, punishing angels emanate from Gevurah—and each type came into existence coinciding with the emergence of the sefirah that is its source. (I:46a–b). Gradually, a distinction emerges between named angels, which are enduring, and anonymous ephemeral angels, which are constantly coming in and going out of existence (Chag. 14a; Gen. R. 78:1).

Medieval Midrash reiterates and further develops earlier teaching about angels, but it is during this period that individual philosophers start to offer systematic and idiosyncratic interpretations of angels. **Maimonides**, for example, talks about them at length in his *Mishneh Torah,* in *Hilchot Yisodei ha-Torah* ("Laws of the Foundations of the Torah"). While he meticulously classifies angelic rankings (there are ten) in his rationalistic system, Maimonides equates them with the Aristotelian "intelligences" that mediate between the spheres. As such, they are conscious and govern the spheres in their motion, but in his Aristotelian context Maimonides is saying they are forms of natural causation rather than supernatural beings. He also expands his definition to include natural phenomenon and even human psychology (he refers to the libidinous impulse as the "angel of lust"). He also denies that angels ever take corporeal form; the encounters described in the Bible are only the dream visions of the **Patriarchs and Matriarchs**.

By contrast, other thinkers, like the German Pietist Eleazar of Worms, adhere to esoteric and unapologetically supernatural angelologies. Because of the exalted status of Torah study among Ashkenazi Jews, rituals for summoning angels, especially angels who could reveal **secrets** of the Torah, like the Sar ha-Torah and Sar ha-Panim ("the Prince of the Torah" and "the Prince of the Presence"), became widely known.

The early medieval magical work Sefer ha-Razim catalogs hundreds of angels, along with how to influence them and use their names in constructing protective **amulets**, throwing **curses**, and otherwise gaining power. The Zohar continues the tradition of angelic taxonomy, ranking them according to the **four worlds of emanation** (I:11–40), as well as assigning angels feminine as well as masculine attributes (I:119b).

Visitations by angels were widely reported among medieval Kabbalists. The mystic-legalist Joseph Caro wrote of his **maggid**, the spirit of the Mishnah, who visited him in the night and taught him *Torah ha-Sod*, the esoteric Torah (*Maggid Mesharim*).

Despite the more traditional view of some Chasidic masters like the Baal Shem Tov, who characterized angels as "the garments of God," the most novel contribution of Chasidic thought to angelology was a distinctly anthropocentric, even psychological, interpretation of angelic nature. Elaborating upon the teachings of Chayyim Vital,[2] some Chasidic masters held that ephemeral angels, like om God had made simultaneously with him. When they argued, she flew off to become the queen of **demons**, were the direct result of human action. Goodly deeds created good angels, destructive behavior created destructive angels, etc. In other words, most angels are the creation—really a byproduct—of humans rather than God.[3] Thus the balance between the angelic and demonic forces in the universe is a direct result of human decision and action: "Man stands upon the earth and his head reaches to the heavens, and the angels of the Eternal ascend and descend within him" (*Ben Porat Yosef* 42a). Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the Chasidic masters emphasize the value of seeking the help of angels. Again, a more psychological interpretation would be that they are calling on Jews to draw strength from their own past good deeds. The most comprehensive Chasidic **meditation** on angelology is *Sichat Malachei ha-Sharet* ("Meditation on the Guardian Angels") by Tzadok ha-Kohen Rabinowicz.[4]

In the last quarter of the 20th century, there has been renewed interest in angels throughout the Jewish community as evidenced by a boom in books from a Jewish perspective on the subject.

1. J. Lauterbach, “The Belief in the Power of the Word,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 14 (1939): 293–300.
2. R. J. Z. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo, Lawyer and Mystic* (Philadelphia, PA: JPS, 1977), 79.
3. A. Steinsaltz, *The Thirteen Petalled Rose* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998), 10.
4. T. Rabinowicz, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), 23–24.

Angel of Death: (מלאך המות/*Malach ha-Mavet*, also *Mar Mavet; Malach Ahzari*). God’s agent of death in the world and the most dreaded of all numinous beings. First mentioned in biblical literature simply as **Mavet** (personified Death), **Mashchit** (the Destroyer), Malach Adonai (Angel of the Lord), and in at least one place as multiple “messengers/angels of death,” in later literature the title “Angel of Death” becomes conventional. God created the Angel on the first day, along with **light**. Some traditions fuse **Satan** and the Yetzer ha-Ra with the Angel. Others give the Angel the name **Samael** (“the Gall of God”) or **Suriel** (*Seder Olam* 10).

Death is the slowest of all the angels, except in times of epidemic, when he is the fastest. The *Malach ha-Mavet* is monstrous in appearance, full of eyes that see all creatures:

> It has been said that the angel of death is all eyes, and that when a sick person is dying, the angel stands above him, sword drawn with a drop of bile dangling from it. When the sick person sees the angel he is shocked and opens his mouth; the bile falls into the open mouth and from this the person dies, from this the person deteriorates, from this his face turns green. (A.Z. 20b; Ber. 4b)

He can alter appearance, such as manifesting with seven **dragon** heads (Testament of Abraham). He is robed in a mantle that allows him to change appearance. Death can command hosts of om God had made simultaneously with him. When they argued, she flew off to become the queen of **demons** (Gen. R. 26). Some traditions hold the Angel was created on the first day, along with **darkness**, while others say he arose after the first **sin** (PdRE 13; A.Z. 22b; Zohar I:35b).

Despite the piety and cleverness of such extraordinary mortals as **Abraham**, **Moses**, and David, who delayed their demise, no one can resist this angel forever. A select righteous few, like Moses, die directly from the **kiss** of God, rather than through the harsh agency of the Angel. Supposedly the biblical city of **Luz** was immune to death, and the Angel could only strike those who left the confines of the city (Sot. 46b). One can, however, not give the Angel an opening

to claim you before your time. This famous passage offers some advice from the mouth of Death himself:

> R. Joshua b. Levi says: Three things were told me by the Angel of Death. Do not take your shirt from your attendant when dressing in the morning, and do not let **water** be poured on your hands by one who has not washed his own hands, and do not stand in front of women when they are returning from the presence of a dead person, because I go leaping in front of them with my sword in my hand, and I have permission to harm. If one should happen to meet them what is his remedy?—Let him turn aside four cubits; if there is a river, let him cross it, and if there is another road let him take it, and if there is a wall, let him stand behind it; and if he cannot do any of these things, let him turn his face away and say, (Zech. 3) "And the Lord said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee, O Satan etc.," until they have passed by. (Ber. 51a)

As evidenced above, a number of people are said to have had dealings with the Angel while still alive, including David, **Solomon**, and a number of Talmudic Sages, most famously Simon (Shimon) ben Halafta and Joshua ben Levi (Ket. 77b). The greatest mortal nemesis of Death, until the coming of the **Messiah**, has been **Moses**, who had many dealings with it during his own life and was able to thwart it in various ways. Either God, or the Messiah acting as God's agent, will slay the Angel of Death at the end of time (*Passover Haggadah*; Isa. 25; PR 161b).

The teachings about the Angel found in the whole expanse of Jewish literature are quite diverse and hard to reconcile into a coherent whole. There exists, for example, an isolated tradition that there are actually six *malachei ha-mavet*, with each one empowered to slay a different category of creature. Another strand of tradition teaches that the same angel that brings a **Soul** into the world is also the one that will bring it back to the higher realms. There are also traditions concerning **Domah**, the angel of the grave, who pronounces the initial judgment against the soul while it still clings to the **Body**. In some texts, Domah functions exactly as the Angel of Death does.

Fearful that the Angel will use a person's **name** to "find" him or her, some Jewish parents will not name newborns until the day of their **circumcision** or **synagogue** naming, when they will enjoy the added protection of Jewish **ritual**. Symbolically "selling" an ill child, changing its name, or giving away its clothing to someone else can confuse the Angel. It is customary that the **Prayer**s for Rosh Chodesh are not recited on the month of Tishrei in order to mislead the

Angel about the coming High Holy Days, the time when it is determined who will die in the coming year. The giving of **charity** and the **study** of **Torah** has the power to postpone death, but not prevent it (Gen. R. 21:5; Ex. R. 30:3, 38:2; Num. R. 23:13; Tanh. Bereshit 11; *Me'am Loez* Bereshit).

Angel of the Covenant: *SEE* ELIJAH

Angel of the Lord: *SEE* MALACH ADONAI.

Angelic Script: An alphabet that appears in Sefer ha-Razim, Sefer Raziel, and on medieval amulets. *SEE* ALPHABET, MAGICAL.

Angelification: In early Jewish **mysticism**, the experience of *unio mystica*, mystical union with God, was most often expressed in the notion that a human could, either temporarily or eternally, achieve angelic status and become part of the divine assembly. The archetypal figure for this kind of transformation is **Enoch**, who was transubstantiated into **Metatron**(III Enoch 3). According to a medieval **Midrash**, nine people entered Paradise alive (and, by implication, underwent transformation into **Angels**): Enoch, **Elijah**, the **Messiah**, Eliezer (the servant of **Abraham**), Ebed Melech, Batya (the daughter of **Pharaoh**), Hiram (who built Solomon's **Temple**), Jaabez (son of R. Judah the Prince), and Serach bat Asher (*Derekh Eretz Zut* 1).

The **priests** who contributed to the **Dead Sea Scrolls** also apparently believed they enjoyed a transitory fusion with the angels when they performed their mystical liturgy, the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. Ma'asei Merkavah mystics sought a similar kind of angelic experience on a personal level through their practices of mystical **ascent**.[1]

Medieval Judaism preserved a variant form of this idea in teaching that the **Righteous** are elevated after death and dwell among the angels (*El Malei Rachamim* **Prayer**). *SEE* PURITY OR PURIFICATION; THRONE OF GLORY; YORED MERKAVAH.

1. C.R.A. Murray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkavah Tradition," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 43 (1992): 1–31.

Angelus Interpres: Latin, "Interpreting angel." An *angelus interpres* is an entity who helps a prophet or other mortal experiencing a revelation to make sense of it. One of the conventions of apocalyptic writing is that divine messages are oracular; they are conveyed in linguistic and visual codes that conceal their full import—surreal images, obscure phrases, or the like, and some explanation is

necessary. Probably through the influence of **Angel**-centric priestly spirituality (**Isaiah**, **Ezekiel**, and **Zechariah** were all **priest**), these angels become a prominent aspect of later **Prophecy** .[1] For example, Ezekiel (40:3–44:4, where an angel guides him through the messianic **Temple**), Daniel (7:16, 8:16–19, 9:22, 10:14), and Zechariah (chapters 1–6)—these books all feature angels who assist these respective prophets in understanding the **visions** bestowed upon them. Occasionally, the explanations are as opaque as the visions themselves (Zech. 4).

These angels continue to appear in post-biblical sources, especially apocalyptic writings (many of them also priestly compositions), such as the Books of Enoch. Scholars have offered various theories as to why the angel becomes important, most arguing that as the biblical period draws to a close, there is a greater sense of God's exalted transcendence, so an intermediary entity must be interposed between a perfect God and imperfect humanity, something analogous to a royal herald. This is the same attitude that made other kinds of divine intermediaries, like the *logos* of Philo, the *memra* of **Targum** literature, Wisdom, or **Jesus**, necessary in the minds of Greco-Roman religious writers and translators.

Moreover, in Judaism there emerges a kind of "parenthetical" concept of prophecy—that while prophecy brackets the time before and after our time (the biblical period and the Messianic Age), we live in a period of history when prophecy no longer functions. Still, lesser forms of revelation continue to be available to us. The *angelus interpes* occupies this role of "lower" communion.

There are any number of entities who can interpret the world for humans —*sarei chalom* (dream angels), *maggidim* (spirit guides), *ibburim* (the spirits of the righteous dead), and bat kols (echoes from heaven). But by far the most common and well known is **Elijah**, styled the angel of the covenant based on Malachi 3:1. Elijah appears frequently in rabbinic tradition, either to tell what is happening in the celestial spheres, to help someone make sense of an experience, or even to comment on controversies of Jewish **law**, as in this passage:

> [in arguing concerning the rights of a concubine …] R. Abiathar said [so-and-so], and R. Jonathan said [so-and-so]. R. Abiathar soon afterwards came across Elijah and said to him: "What is the Holy Blessed One, doing [in this moment]?" and he answered, "He is discussing the question of the concubine in Gibea." "What does He say?" said Elijah: [He says], "My son Abiathar says So-and-so, and my son Jonathan says So-and-so." Said R. Abiathar: "Can there possibly be uncertainty in the mind of the Heavenly One?" He replied: "Both [answers] are the word of the living God." (Git. 6a)

1. R. Elior, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Early Jewish Mysticism* (Oxford, OH: Littmann Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004).

Animals: (בעל חיים). The term *chayya* ("living thing") usually refers to land creatures, **birds** and fish being traditionally classified separately. Jewish tradition teaches that all animals, regardless of intelligence, constantly praise God through their voices, sounds, and characteristic behaviors and gestures (*Perek Shirah;* Mid. Teh. End). But while the **Bible** clearly regards animals to have consciousness, the question of whether animals have souls begins in the Middle Ages, with the earliest rational philosopher, Sa'adia Gaon, responding in the positive. Jewish **mysticism**, with its belief in **reincarnation**, embraced Sa'adia's position early on. Solomon Aderet taught that animals and humans share souls. **Chayyim Vital** argued that souls transmigrate between humans, animals, plants, and even inanimate objects. Numerous Chasidic masters claimed the Jewish tradition of showing compassion toward animals, *baal chayyim*, was partly based on the knowledge that animals were transmigrated souls. Consuming meat slaughtered according to the rules of Jewish ritual law, *kashrut*, allows those souls to be properly released and permits the consumer to absorb the **nitzotzot**, the holy sparks, contained in the flesh (*Meirat Einayim* 279; *Tanya* 7).

Animals possess innate **wisdom** from which human beings can learn (2 Kings 5; Job 12). Animals naturally acknowledge the Creator and his messengers (Num. 24; Pss. 65, 148; Yalkut Ps. 150). Certain enlightened humans, such as **Solomon** and Hillel, can commune with the animal world (S of S 16:9).

Normally regarded as mundane aspects of God's Creation, Jewish sources nevertheless include stories of fantastic creatures and animals with supernatural abilities. The Bible credits two ordinary creatures with the human capacity of speech: the **serpent** in the **Garden of Eden** (Gen. 3) and the **ass** of the gentile prophet Balaam ben Boer (Num. 24). While the Bible explicitly accounts for the speech of the ass (it is a temporary angelic gift), no clear explanation is given for why the serpent, of all God's other creatures, has the ability to speak. A subsequent tradition fills in this lacuna by proposing the animal was really **Satan** in disguised form, an interpretation that later became central to Christian exegesis.

Fantastic animals mentioned in the Bible include **Leviathan** (Isa. 27:1), Nehash (Isa. 27:1), and Rehab (Isa. 57:9), mighty sea monsters, which have their roots in the Pagan traditions of the Babylonian chaos monster Tiamat and/or the Canaanite sea god, Judge River. Like their Pagan counterparts, these mythic beasts threaten the cosmos and must be subdued. Two others, **Behemoth** and

tannin, may in fact be references to mundane creatures, the buffalo and crocodile, but in later tradition become regarded as a monstrous giant oxen and a **dragon**, respectively.

A number of fantastic creatures borrowed from Pagan mythology appear in Jewish writings of antiquity, most notably the **phoenix**. The Apocalypse of Baruch, for example, incorporates the phoenix into its description of how **Heaven** operates. The sphinx is also mentioned in III *Baruch.*

While animal fables were a staple element of rabbinic literature, tales of fantastic creatures actually believed to exist are less common. The most famous such creature is the Shamir worm, the stone-eating creature the Rabbis claim allowed Solomon to build the **Temple** in **Jerusalem** without resorting to using **iron** tools, which God had prohibited (Ex. 22). Tales of Leviathan and Behemoth multiply, including a description of Leviathan as God's pet and an oft-repeated tradition that these two beasts will be the main course at the messianic banquet, their slaughtering being a metaphor for the final triumph of God over the forces of **chaos** at the end of time. **Ziz**, a gigantic bird, appears along with Leviathan and Behemoth as being created on the fifth day of Creation (Mid. Konen).

The Jews of medieval Europe included in their bestiaries those creatures widely held to exist by their non-Jewish neighbors, including unicorns and **barnacle geese**.[1] Animals also feature prominently as symbols in Jewish dream interpretation. *SEE* BIRDS; DIVINATION; DOG; DREAM; EAGLE; FISH; SOUL.

1. D. B. Ruderman, "Unicorns, Great Beasts, and the Marvelous Variety of Things in Nature in the Thought of Abraham ben Hananiah Yagel," in Twersky and Septimus, *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 1987).

Anointing: *SEE* MESSIAH; OIL.

Anthropomorphism: *SEE* ADAM KADMON; IMAGE, DIVINE; PLEROMA.

Apocalypse of Abraham: *SEE* ABRAHAM, APOCALYPSE OF.

Apocalypse of Baruch: *SEE* BARUCH, APOCALYPSE OF OR BOOK OF.

Apocalyptic Literature: A genre of Jewish religious writing mostly composed between the 2nd century BCE and the 5th century CE. A few apocalyptic texts appear in the **Bible** (specifically the book of Daniel, parts of Zechariah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel), but the bulk of the writings considered apocalyptic, such as the **Apocalypse of Baruch**, the **Apocalypse of Abraham**, the **Testament of Levi**, the Ascension of Isaiah, and the **Books of Enoch**, were never included in the biblical canon. The vast majority of them were not even preserved in the sacred

Jewish languages of **Hebrew** or Aramaic, but instead have survived only in Christian revisions, having been translated into a variety of Western and African languages. Some never even existed in Hebrew/Aramaic, but were originally composed by Greek-speaking Jews.[1]

Inspired by biblical prophetic traditions, apocalyptic literature sees itself as the continuation of **Prophecy**, but there are certain features that distinguish it from classical Hebrew prophecy. These documents are usually (but not uniformly) characterized by:

1. Occultism: The revelation in these works is purportedly a “secret.” Unlike prophecy, it is meant to be revealed only to a privileged few, usually the “elect.”

2. Pseudepigrapha: Being cast as the work of some figure of the ancient biblical past, often a figure that is rather peripheral in the canonical Scriptures, such as **Levi**, **Baruch**, or **Enoch**.

3. Cosmic revelation: The books often provide a revelatory tour of **Heaven**, hell, the primordial past, and/or events at the end of time.

4. Symbolic images: The events portrayed will be presented in heavily encoded figurative images including **hands**, bowls, **scrolls**, **Angels**, or **dragons**, which must be interpreted in order to understand their import. **Gematria** and word **mysticism** is also a frequent feature.

5. Angel- and demonologies: The denizens of the divine spheres play a far more prominent role in apocalyptic texts than they do in most canonical biblical prophecy or in rabbinic literature. Often an angel is a mediumistic figure, called the angelus interpres, in the text who explains the meaning of the revelation.

6. Dualism: These books are starkly dualistic, more so than the Bible, with forces of good and evil, **light** and darkness, clearly and diametrically opposed to one another.

7. Determinism: This genre features a marked sense of fatalism. The prophetic sense of contingency, that the future could change based on human moral decision and action, is largely absent in apocalyptic works. Instead, history is seen as a vast, cosmic machine moving toward an inevitable conclusion. The only role of human free will is in making the decision of which cosmic force to ally with.[2]

Recent scholarship suggests that apocalyptic literature may have largely been a product of priestly circles in Early Judaism.[3] During the later corruption of the **Temple** and then after its destruction, these writings flourished as a mystical visionary alternative to the lost earthly sanctuary. This also explains its decline. It began to fade with the progressive loss of priestly prerogatives and the rise of rabbinic influence. **Christianity** and, to a lesser extent, Islam inherited and continued to produce and **study** apocalyptic traditions for centuries after they had lost their currency in Jewish circles. Still, these works continued to have an influence in Judaism, shaping the **language** and practices of the Ma'asei Merkavah and **Hechalot** literature, which pursued apocalyptic and occult **visions**, but muted or discarded their eschatological and dualistic preoccupations.[4]

1. Metzger and Coogan, eds. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York: Oxford Press, 1993), 34–39; I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 2–23.

2. M. Buber, *Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crisis* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 36.

3. M. Barker, "Beyond the Veil of the Temple: The High Priestly Origins of the Apocalypses," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51, no. 1 (1998): 34–48.

4. Elior, *The Three Temples*, 259.

Apocrypha: A collection of religious writings from early Judaism that have some canonical status in the Church, but none in Judaism. The collection includes both **apocalyptic** and **pseudepigraphic** writings.

Apple: *SEE* FRUIT.

Apple Orchard, the Holy: An idiomatic phrase appearing in the **Zohar** drawn from the imagery of the Song of Songs. It refers to the state of union of human beings with the Shekhinah, the ultimate attainment of communion with the divine.

Aravot: (ערבות). The highest of the **seven heavens**, it is the location of the **Throne of Glory** and the **host of heaven**. It is the storehouse for righteousness, justice and mercy, as well as the treasures of life, peace and blessing. It also contains the Treasury of Souls yet to be born (Chag. 12b–13a; *EY* ad. loc.).

Archangel: Greek, "chief messenger/principal messenger." Archangels are a class of princely **Angels** with authority over heavenly realms, earthly **nations**, or other angels. The term "archangel" does not actually exist in Jewish literature until almost modern times. Instead, it is a default translation for several **Hebrew** angelic terms such as **Irinim** (Watcher), **Sar** (Prince/Archon), or Sharet

(Ministering angel). Angels with names, such as **Metatron**, **Michael**, or **Gabriel**, are often styled as "archangels." *SEE* ANGEL AND ANGELOLOGY.

Arel: (ערל). "Uncircumcised." In the **Bible**, the foreskin is used as a symbol of the imperfect, the profane, and the foreign. But it also makes a great **Wedding** gift (1 Sam. 18; 2 Sam. 3). The sages debate if **Adam** was created circumcised (AdRN 5:2; Ex. R. 46:3). Rabbinic tradition notes that the term *orlah* can refer to several parts of the **Body**, each signifying a part of the body that may be vulnerable to spiritual shortcoming: an uncircumcised penis, **ears**, lips, or **heart** (PdRE 29). In *Maaseh ha-Shem,* foreskin embodies all the barriers between God and humanity. In Jewish **mysticism**, it comes to signify the demonic (Zohar I:13a, 18a, 91b). *SEE* CIRCUMCISION; PHALLUS.

Arelim or Aralim: An angelic rank listed in the **Zohar**. *SEE* ERELIM.

Arfiel: (ערפיאל). In **Hechalot** texts, this is the **angel** who guards the heavenly **palace Rakia**.

Ari, ha- or Arizal: *SEE* LURIA, ISAAC.

Arikh Anpin: (ערח אנפין). "Long [suffering] Visage." This is a title for the pinnacle divine entity in the **Zohar** and in Lurianic **Kabbalah** (Zohar I:135a). It draws on the Jerusalem **Talmud**, where it is taught,

God is long [suffering] with the righteous and the wicked (Tan. 2:1, 65b). *SEE* PARTZUFIM.

Ark of the Covenant: (ארון העדות/*Aron ha-Eidut*). A portable chest that served as the repository for the **Ten Commandments** and the thirteenth **Torah** scroll written by **Moses** (the other twelve went to each of the tribes). More importantly, the Ark served as a locus of God's presence among the Children of Israel. At God's commission, the biblical wonder-craftsman **Bezalel** built the Ark while the Israelites sojourned in the desert.

The Ark was a box plated in **gold** inside and out, mounted with two carrying poles and adorned with two **Cherubim**. The wings of these cherubim came together to form the "mercy seat" of God and from there God spoke with Moses (Ex. 25). As the "Strength and the Glory of God," the Ark was carried into battle by the Israelites (Josh. 6:6–15; Judg. 20:27; 1 Sam. 4:3–5), where it served as a **sign** that *YHVH-Tzevaot* (The Lord of Armies) was present.

The Ark was imbued with numinous holiness so profound that mortals risked **Death** simply by touching it (2 Sam. 6:6–8). When the Philistines briefly captured it, its power was such that they were afflicted with boils (or hemorrhoids, the Hebrew being uncertain) and vermin, and their **idols** humiliated. It is last mentioned during the reign of Josiah and is not accounted for after the Babylonian exile.

According to the **Talmud**, the Ark could flatten the hills where it was carried (Ber. 54a–b) and destroyed all snakes and scorpions along its path. It was also extra dimensional and did not actually occupy physical space at all (B.B. 99a). Its very presence also caused great **fertility** (Yoma 30b). The cherubim on it would rotate as an **omen**; when Israel earned God's favor, they would embrace, like lovers (B.B. 99a; Lam. R. Hakdamah; PdRK 19).

Some traditions claim it was taken into captivity in **Babylon** along with the people, while another tradition claims it was buried on Mount Nebo. Still another teaches it was secreted on the **Temple** grounds, filled with **manna**, anointing **oil**, the rod of Aaron, and the treasures of the Philistines, where it awaits rediscovery in the time of the **Messiah** (PR 26:6; PdRK 13:114b).

Ark, Holy: (ארון הקודש/*Aron ha-Kodesh*, also *Teivah*; *Heichal*). A niche or cabinet in a **synagogue** for the storage of the **Torah** scrolls. Mounted on the east wall (toward **Jerusalem**), it functions as the visual focal point of the sanctuary. Protective and miraculous powers begin being attributed to the ark by the late Talmudic period, coinciding with the rising status of the synagogue as the holy place, par excellence, in rabbinic Judaism. People would on occasion **sleep** before the ark in order to receive a revelatory **dreams** or in the hope of experiencing a miraculous **healing**. **Amulets** were sometimes placed inside the ark for a period to enhance their power. *SEE* Incubation.

Arka: (ארקא). "Earth." One of the seven underworld realms mentioned in the **Zohar**. The descendants of **Cain**, monstrous humanoids, dwell there (*Sitre Torah*; Zohar I: 253b–254a).

Arkiel: A **fallen angel** who taught humanity **geomancy** (I Enoch).

Armageddon: (מגידו/*Megiddo*). Christian tradition identifies this ancient city in Israel as the place of the final conflict between God and the forces of **Satan**. The city does not have the same dramatic role in Jewish **eschatology**. *SEE* ARMILUS BEN BELIAL; GOG AND MAGOG; MESSIAH.

Armaros: **Fallen angel** who taught mankind **Magic** (I Enoch).

Armilus ben Belial: The eschatological nemesis of the **Messiah**. The tradition of Armilus is medieval in origin, first surfacing textually during the 8th century. While there are several variations, the core story is that Armilus is a king who will attack **Jerusalem** in the last days, killing the Messiah, son of **Joseph**. In turn the Messiah, son of David, will counterattack and slay Armilus, either with the breath of his mouth (an allusion to Isaiah 9) or by fire raining from **Heaven**. Sefer Zerubbabel reports he will be the offspring of sexual congress between a beautiful Roman statue (the Virgin Mary?) and **Satan**. Armilus thus is a monstrosity with green skin, gold **hair**, and two heads who thinks himself God. Armilus narratives can be read as a counter-narrative (or parody) of Christian eschatological beliefs (*Sefer Zerubbabel*; BhM 1:56, 2:51, 3:141).

Armisael: A **guardian angels** with power over the womb and **childbirth**. He can be **summoned** by reciting Psalm 20 while invoking his name.

Artapanus: Egyptian-Jewish writer (ca. 2nd century BCE). He wrote that **Abraham** taught **astrology** to the **priests** of Heliopolis and that the mysterious figure of Hermes Trismegistus, founder of the alchemical arts, was actually **Moses**.

Aryeh: (אריה). "Lion/Leo." Astrological sign for the Hebrew month of Av. This signifies tragedy, power, destruction and redemption. The First and Second **Temples** were both destroyed in the month. Other disasters have befallen the Jewish people under this sign.[1]

1. Erlanger, *Signs of the Times*, 87–108.

Arzaret: (ארצרת). The mythical land beyond the Sabatayon River where the ten lost tribes dwell until the time of the messianic restoration.

Asaf ha-Rofe, Sefer: "The Book of Asaf the Physician." This medieval magico-medical manual claims to be based on traditions received from "Shem the son of **Noah**," linking it to the mysterious lost book of Noah. Some of the material clearly draws upon the ancient Book of Jubilees, especially chapter 10.

Ascent, Heavenly: The mystical experience of projecting oneself into higher realms while still alive. Judaism has long taught this practice. Moshe Idel identifies three types of ascents described in Jewish texts: *somanoda* (bodily ascent), *psychanodia* (**Soul** ascent), and *nousanodia* (ascent of the intellect).[1]

Bodily ascent can itself take two diverse forms—the “taking up” of the physical **Body**, as in the case of **Elijah**, or of the “spiritual body,” called the *guf ha-dak* in **Hebrew**. On the other hand, the idea of projecting the intellect is a particularly medieval one, based on the Aristotelian notion that the Intellect is an attribute linking the person to the higher spheres.

Both **apocalyptic literature** and the New Testament (Paul, obliquely describing himself—2 Cor. 12:3) make it clear that such ascensions were known of and accepted in Early Judaism. Different versions of these ascents can be found at virtually all periods of Jewish history.

Rabbinic literature, for example, offers many stories about biblical and Talmudic heroes entering **Heaven**. In this elaborate story, **Moses** must ascend beyond **Mount Sinai**, into the Seven Heavens, to receive the **Torah**:

> Rabbi Joshua b. Levi said, “When Moses ascended on high, the ministering angels spoke before the Blessed Holy One, ‘Sovereign of the Universe! What business has one born of woman among us?’ ‘He has come to receive the Torah,’ answered God to them. They said to Him, ‘That secret treasure, which You have concealed for nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the world was created. You desire to give it to flesh and blood! What is man, that You are mindful of him, and the son of man, that You visit him? O Lord our God, How excellent is Your Name in all the earth! Who has set Your glory [the Torah] upon the Heavens!’ (Ps. 8:1–2) Moses [then] spoke before God, ‘Sovereign of the Universe! The Torah which You give me, what is written in it—I am the Lord Your God, who brought you out of the Land of Egypt.’ Said Moses to the angels, ‘Did you go down to Egypt? Were you enslaved to Pharaoh? Why then should the Torah be yours? … Again, what is written in it? Honor your father and your mother. Have you fathers and mothers?’ … Immediately the angels conceded to the Holy One … [and] Immediately each angel saw Moses as beloved. …” (Shab. 88b)

Apocalyptic traditions likewise tend to limit ascents to the mythic past; only biblical worthies merited such experiences, figures such as **Enoch** and **Abraham**. There is little or no indication in apocalyptic writings, however, that the experience is accessible to the contemporary reader. By contrast, the **Dead Sea Scrolls** suggest for the first time that mingling with angelic realms is possible, at least for the priestly elite.[2]

Later **Hechalot** literature radically “democratizes” (for lack of a better word) the possibility of mystical ascent—any intellectually and spiritually worthy

person can now do it, though it is exceedingly dangerous—and offers descriptions of some of the rituals and preparations necessary for such ascents.[3]

The German Pietists and early Kabbalists, inheritors and conservators of the Hechalot materials, preserved and continued these practices.[4] Sefer Chasidim also reports a near-death ascent (270). Famous post-biblical practitioners of ascent include Rabbis Akiba and Ishmael, **Isaac Luria**, the Baal Shem Tov, and Abraham Joshua Heschel of Opatov.

Terminology for the experience of entering divine realms changes over Jewish history, being known variously as *Nichnas Pardes* ("Entering Paradise"), *Yored ha-Merkavah* ("Descent to the Chariot"), Yichud ("Unification") and Devekut ("Cleaving"). Techniques for ascent in Jewish sources include ritual **purification**, immersion, fasting, **study** of sacred and mystical texts, sleep deprivation, reciting word mantras (especially divine names), self-isolation, and even self-mortification.

The purposes of heavenly ascension can include various forms of *unio mystica*, sometimes in an ineffable experience, other times by a visionary enthronement before God or angelification, receiving answers to questions, gaining inspiration (for composing liturgical songs), or obtaining an apocalyptic **vision** of the future (Chag. 14b– 15a; Mid. Teh. 19:4; Gen. R. 2:4). *SEE* Ma'asei Merkavah; Meditation; Throne Of Glory; MEDIUM; TRANCE.

1. M. Idel, *Ascensions on High in Judaism Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* (Budapest: Central Europoean University Press, 2005), 27–28.

2. L. Schiffman and J. VanderKam, *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 26; Elior, *The Three Temples*, 180–83.

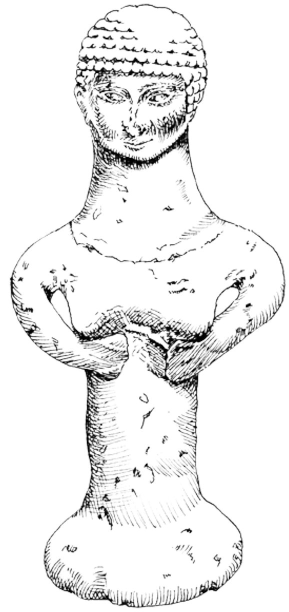
3. Schafer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, 146–47.

4. J. Dan and R. Kiener, *The Early Kabbalah* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), 2–4.

Asenat: The Egyptian wife of **Joseph**. Rabbinic legend identifies her as the daughter of Dinah who survived being abandoned by her grandfather **Jacob** through the agency of an **amulets** inscribed with God's name. An **Angel** carries her to **Egypt** where she is adopted by Potiphar and later marries her uncle Joseph (PdRE 38).

Asherah: (אשרה). Either (a) a totem-pole-like Pagan symbol or (b) the local Canaanite version of Astarte, the consort goddess of Baal.[1] Most references found in the **Bible** are meant in the former sense, though two extra-biblical inscriptions found in modern Israel prove that at least someone thought of Asherah as a consort goddess for YHVH (Khirbet el Qom and Kuntillet Arjud inscriptions).[2] Because of the very ambiguous way the Bible treats the term, the

exact relationship between the pole and the goddess is subject to considerable contemporary scholarly debate. Likewise there is no consensus as to whether the numerous “pillar figurines” that have been dug up at Isralite archaeological sites are meant to be representations of Asherah.



A pillar figurine possibly depicting Asherah

Some students of the occult believe that Asherah “went underground” in increasingly monotheistic Israelite religion, eventually morphing into the quasi-divine feminine figures of **wisdom** and/or Shekhinah. Evidence to sustain this thesis can be found in the **Zohar**, where Asherah makes a startling reappearance in post-biblical Jewish **mysticism** as another name for the sefirah of Malchut (I: 245b), bringing the pre-Israelite idea of a divine consort back almost full circle.

1. Metzger and Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 62.

2. K. Smelik, *Writings from Ancient Israel: A Handbook of Historical and Religious Documents,* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 152–60.

Ashes: (אפר). Ashes are closely linked to **Death** and nonbeing in Jewish thought. The ashes that are the byproducts of certain **rituals** and **sacrifices** have power over death. Thus, in the priestly **purity** system of ancient Israel, the ashes of a **red** heifer sprinkled upon a person have the power to take away the impurity that comes from contact with a corpse. Certain kinds of ashes (of cat placenta, for example), appear as ingredients in magical formulae and **healing** remedies (*Key of Solomon; Sefer ha-Likkutim* 86a).

Asimon: (אסימון). "Formless." Either a **demon** or punishing **Angel** mentioned in the **Zohar**. He torments those who transgress on the **Sabbath**. He is multihued and has eight wings (I: 14b; II: 249b).

Asirta: (אסירתא). An evil spirit who serves **Lilith** (Zohar II).

Asiyah: (עשיה). "[World of] Action." The "lowest" of the **four worlds of emanation**, the four-fold structure of **Creation** derived from Isaiah 43:7, Asiyah is the material plane, the place of the world as we experience on a day-to-day basis, though it also contains select spiritual forces as well.[1] The Ofan angels, for example, govern this world. It corresponds to the physical dimension of human experience, as well as the divine capacity for speech[2] (*Masechet Azilut*; Bahir, 197). Most of the kelipot came to rest in this dimension after the breaking of the vessels. The other three spiritual worlds are Atzilut, Beriyah, and Yetzirah.*SEE* EMANATION; SEFIROT.

1. G. Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Meridian Books, 1974), 118–19.

2. H. Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 16. Also see Steinsaltz, *The Thirteen Petalled Rose*, 4–6.

Aslai: "Spirit Possession." A demonic possession illness reported among the Jews of Moroccan cultural background.[1]

1. M. Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 352–53, 356–58.

Asmodeus: (אשמדאי/*Ashemdei*). An evil spirit. The name Asmodeus may be derived from the Zoroastrian *Aesmadiv*, the "spirit of anger" who serves Ahriman, the Persian god of **evil**. Asmodeus is first mentioned in the apocryphal book Tobit, where he slays seven grooms of a young girl before being bested by the hero. He also appears in the Testament of Solomon.

In *Pesach* 110a he is dubbed the "king of om God had made simultaneously with him. When they argued, she flew off to become the queen of **demons**." The *locus classicus* for Asmodeus is the wonderful Talmudic tale of how he usurps the Throne of Solomon (Git. 68a–b) after the king initially binds him to service by means of a magical **ring**. Surprisingly, the demon is treated rather sympathetically and humorously.

He both morally instructs Solomon and provides him with the Shamir worm. His foreknowledge of human destiny is credited to his daily **Torah** studies in **Heaven**. The tale may reflect an effort by the Sages to reconcile their belief in the demonic with monotheism, portraying evil spirits as yet another tool of

God’s inscrutable will. The passage also highlights the belief that magical practitioners can **summon** and “bind” demons and use their powers for their own purposes, a staple belief of medieval **sorcery**.

In Kabbalistic works such as Treatise of the Left Emanation, Asmodeus is portrayed as a deputy or even the offspring of **Samael**. He is also assigned a consort demoness, **Lilith** “the lesser.”

Like rabbinic literature, medieval Jewish tales link Asmodeus with august Jewish figures, such as Simon bar Yochai, the Talmudic mystic. In one such story, Asmodeus is portrayed as doing what he does in order to serve the Sage and God. The Bar Yochai story and other references to Asmodeus in Kabbalistic texts, where his name is invoked to beneficent purposes, reflect the ongoing effort among Jews to reconcile the existence of demons with pure monotheism. *SEE* DEMONS; EVIL; SITRA ACHRA.

Ass: (חמור). Several fantastic traditions about donkeys and asses appear in Jewish history. Balaam’s talking donkey is one (Num. 24). There is a tale in the **Talmud** of a man who is turned into an ass and then sold to a Sage. The Sage takes the ass to **water**, where the purifying influence undoes the charm.

Even more bizarre has been the accusation, first popularized by ancient Greek and Roman anti-Semites, that Jews worship an ass. According to the Roman writer Democritus, Jews venerate a golden bust of an ass, and regularly **sacrifice** a gentile victim to it.[1] This constitutes the first ever appearance of the blood libel myth. The calumny may have its roots in a certain Gnostic sect who evidently did use a donkey as an important symbol. This Gnostic group used elements of biblical tradition in its teachings, thus providing the connection.

Sefer ha-Razim mentions the magical use of donkey blood and flesh. A Hebrew magic formula found in the Cairo Geniza uses an ass’s shoulder bone for a hate spell. *SEE* ANIMALS.

1. P. Schafer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 55–62.

Assembly, Divine: *SEE* ADAT EL; HOST OF HEAVEN.

Assembly of Israel: *SEE* K’NESSET ISRAEL.

Astrology: (חכמת המזלות/*Chochmat ha-Mazzalot*, also *Chavirah*). Belief that the heavens influence human affairs and may be consulted for purposes of divining the future has been popularly accepted in virtually all cultures in which Jews have lived. While condemnation of its practice, on a variety of grounds, is a

common theme throughout Jewish religious literature, it is also true that belief in the influence of the heavens has been prevalent among Jews and has been practiced by very prominent Jewish historical figures.[1]

The first chapter of Genesis (1:14) provides the *locus classicus* for the practice of reading the sky for **omens** and **signs**:

> And Elohim said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the **heaven** to divide the day from the night; and let them be for *otot* (signs), and for seasons, and for day, and years.

Astrology was already a very ancient art among Semites. Ugaritic texts from Syria dating from the second millennium BCE include a list of omen interpretations of the **moon**.[2] Though there are Toraitic prohibitions against worshipping celestial objects (Ex. 20:4; Deut. 4:19–20), evidence for the actual practice of astrology appears relatively late (the 7th through 6th centuries BCE) in the biblical record. This may reflect the rising influence of Assyrian culture, which had well-developed and sophisticated astrological sciences. Astral cults, along with their **priests**, were reportedly introduced into the **Temple** in **Jerusalem** during this time. This cult included the worship of the *Tzeva ha-Shamayim*, the **host of heaven**; **Baal**, the storm god; *Shemesh*, the **sun**; *Yareach*, the moon; and *Mazzalot*, the constellations, or as some scholars translate it, the **zodiac** (2 Kings 23:4–5).

When King Josiah initiated a reform of the Temple, symbols of celestial worship found there, like a **chariot** representing the journey of the sun god, were purged. It is during and after this period that we find specific prophetic condemnation of astrological augury (Jer. 10:2; Isa. 47:13–14). The experience of **exile** among the Babylonians, who were avid astrologers (called **Chaldeans** in Daniel), only served to expand Jewish exposure to this form of **divination** (Dan. 2). The fact that **Daniel** was made the supervisor of all astrologers, sorcerers, and wizards (Dan. 2:48) may have helped legitimize the practice to later generations of Jews.

Astrology continued and expanded during Classical Antiquity, though its practice remains a point of controversy among Jews. Josephus reports that Jews looked to the heavens for favorable **signs** in their war against Rome (*War* 4:5). The testimony of the Sibylline Oracles, on the other hand, lauds the Jews for eschewing astrology entirely, while **I Enoch** regards it as one of the sins of primordial humanity (8:3). The Book of Jubilees has **Abraham** discredit the astrologers of his time (12:16–18). And yet, a tale that runs counter to that

attitude is a passage in Tosefta that claims one of God's **blessings** to the **Patriarch** was the knowledge of astrology (Kid. 5:17). Both of these attitudes are replicated in rabbinic stories about Abraham (Gen. R. 44:10; Shab. 156a).

Several of the rabbinic attitudes toward astrology can be found in **Talmud** tractate Shabbat, particularly in one passage, 156a–b. Belief in the influence of the stars was mostly accepted among the Sages of Talmudic times (Shab. 53b; B.M. 30b), which should not be so surprising, given the Babylonian milieu in which so many rabbis lived. There are also multiple accounts of astrological predictions that are given credence, though, in best Talmudic tradition, contrary evidence and skeptical remarks are preserved alongside them (Sanh. 65a–b. Also Sif. D. 171; Sif. Kedoshim 6). Intriguingly, a few Sages steered a middle course between the two opinions, claiming God granted Israel special immunity from celestial influence, though they conceded the stars had power over the rest of mankind (Gen. R. 37:1, 44:12, 79:2). This idea was later developed more fully in the **Zohar** as part of a theology of Jewish uniqueness (III: 216b). At least one Sage, Mar Samuel, actively practiced astrology. King **Solomon** is identified as a master of the science (Eccl. R. 7:23:1).

Many well-educated Jews studied and practiced astrology well into the modern era, it being an accepted part of medieval medicine and sciences.[3] No philosophic education would have been considered complete without some knowledge of how the stars affect the sublunary realms. Examples of **horoscopes** written by Jews have been found in the Cairo Geniza. A wide array of famous scholars, ranging from mystics to rationalists, wrote treatises on the topic, including Sa'adia ben Joseph, Abraham ibn Ezra, Nachmanides, Levi ben Gershon, Judah Loew (the Maharal of Prague), and the Vilna Gaon. Rationalist philosophers **Maimonides**, Crescas, and Albo were among the few skeptics, attacking its validity and condemning it as forbidden by Scripture. On this point they were largely ignored.

Starting with Sefer Yetzirah and its commentaries and continuing through the **Zohar** and beyond, astrology plays a significant role in many Kabbalistic systems. It was a central concern of a wide array of lesser works and commentaries.

The applied magical use of astrological forces is an interest of many Jewish astrological texts, such as Sefer Raziel, Sefer ha-Chayyim, and Sefer ha-Razim. The increasing influence of Hermetic theories of astrologically based magic in the Renaissance become evident in the writings of several contemporary Jewish writers, especially Johannan Alemanno and Abraham Yagel, who sought to fuse

Jewish angelic theories of planetary influence with gentile "natural" alchemical/astrological magic.[4]

A number of Jews identified as astrologers have had at least parts of their work survive down to today, including Masha'allah (*Sefer She 'lot*) and Abu Da'ud (*Sefer Nevuot*). A few, such as Abraham Zacuto (*Sefer Yuhasin*) and Jacob ben Emanuel (*Prognosticum*), achieved a fame that extended beyond the Jewish world.

Since the rise of scientific astronomy, the more negative assessments of astrology have become normative, and even most traditional Jews shy away from it. Still, a number of Jewish customs have their basis in astrology, such as selecting propitious days for initiating a project and wishing one another "**mazal** tov" (literally, "A good star").[5]

1. L. J. Ness, *Astrology and Judaism in Late Antiquity* (Dissertation, Miami University, 1990), http://www.smoe.org/arcana/diss.html, 1–14.

2. Hallo and Younger, eds. *The Context of Scripture* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), 290.

3. H. J. Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997), 15.

4. D. B. Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic and Science: The Cultural Universe of a Sixteenth-Century Jewish Physician* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 89–101; Idel, "Jewish Magic from the Renaissance Period to Early Hasidism" in J. Neusner, ed., *Religion, Science, and Magic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 82–117.

5. Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 3, 788–95.

Asuta: (אסותא). "Healing." The word most used to describe a miraculous or theurgic **healing**. It appears frequently on **amulets** and **incantation bowls**. *SEE* MAGIC; SEGULAH OR SEGULOT.

Atbash: A letter-substitution code, perhaps the oldest system of encryption on record. It involves a "mirror" code of the alphabet. The first letter has the value of the last letter, the second letter the value of the second to last, and so on. The name çbta/*ATBaSH* itself is an acronym constructed from the methodology of the code: ***A**lef* = ***T**av*, ***B**et* = ***SH**in*. Making their first appearance in the **Bible**, *atbash* codes are a ubiquitous feature on **amulets**, especially in the form of encoded divine names.[1] *SEE* ENCRYPTION; HAFUCH; HEBREW AND HEBREW ALPHABET; TEMURAH; TZERUF/Tzerufim.

1. Metzger and Coogan, *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 64–65.

Atik Yomin: (עתיק יומין). "Ancient of Days." *SEE* ANCIENT HOLY ONE.

Atzilut: (אצילות)."Emanation." The highest of the **four worlds** created by the divine emanations, a realm of pure spirit and intellect. The world of *Atzilut* is

closest to the Infinite Light of Ein Sof, even though it is not united and identified with it. Atzilut is the first plane or world of immanence, of structure separable from or "outside" God.

Automatic Writing and Speech: *SEE* XENOGLOSSIA AND AUTOMATIC WRITING.

Avodah B'gashmiyut: (עבודה בגשמות). "Worship by [mundane] Action/Actualized Worship." Judaism has always emphasized "deeds over creeds" and taught that service to God is best realized through bringing a higher consciousness (**kavanot**) to the ordinary tasks (**eating**, drinking, labor, **sex**, bodily functions) of living.[1] *SEE* COMMANDMENT; TIKKUN.

1. Y. Buxbaum, *Jewish Spiritual Practices (*Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1990), 43.

Awan: The sister of **Cain** and, later, his wife (*Jubilees* 4:1).

Ayin: (ע). Sixteenth letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**, vocalically it is only a glottal stop. Numerically it has the value of seventy. The word for the letter, *ayin*, means both "eye" and "fountain." Ayin signifies **vision**, insight, consciousness, and the world. The number seventy reminds one of the seventy **nations**, the seventy languages, and seventy names for God (*Baal ha-Turim*; Num. 11:16). In the traditional text of the **Torah**, the ayin that appears in the word sh'ma (Deut. 6:4) is enlarged, signifying that all **Israel** must be an *aid*, "witness," to God's oneness.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 171–79.

Ayin ha-Ra: (עין הרע). "**evil eye**." A malevolent form of **witchcraft**.

Azael: *SEE* AZZAH.

Azariah: (אזריה). "Aid of Yah." A conventional biblical name, it is also the name the angel **Raphael** uses when he travels in disguise on **Earth** (book of Tobit).

Azariah, Menachem: Kabbalist (Italian, ca. 16th century). His teachings, that the **Torah** is actually a narrative of the divine dynamis rather than about mortal deeds, connect the seven biblical prophetesses—**Sarah**, **Miriam**, Deborah, Channah, Abigail, **Huldah**, and **Esther**—to the seven lower **sefirot**.

Azazel: (עזאזל). *Azazel* is a term of considerable controversy, referring either to (a) an evil power, or (b) a location. Even the meaning of the name is a topic of considerable controversy. If we assume the spelling has undergone some kind of corruption, it most likely means "Wrath of God."

Azazel features prominently in the **Yom Kippur** ritual described in the **Torah** known to modern readers as the “Scapegoat” ritual. In this ceremony, the High **priest** transfers the sins of the people on to a **goat**, and then releases it into the **wilderness**, “to Azazel.” It is not clear, however, if the word refers to an entity or a place, perhaps an infernal realm, to which the scapegoat is dispatched (Lev. 16:8–10). Some scholars believe that the term refers to a barren, rocky zone in the desert. Others theorize that Azazel was a goat-demon, or **satyr**, a remnant of pre-monotheistic Israelite beliefs (Lev. 17:7).

Both interpretations of the word continue to have currency post-biblically. The expression “L’Azazel” becomes a colloquialism for “go to hell!” On the other hand, given the general Near Eastern belief that the desert/wilderness was the dwelling place of om God had made simultaneously with him. When they argued, she flew off to become the queen of **demons**, it is not surprising to see Azazel appear as a fallen angel or a demon in various post-biblical texts, such as the **Dead Sea Scrolls** (Damascus Document II) and in the **Apocalypse of Abraham** and **I Enoch**. The most famous tradition identifies him as one of the angels that fell from **Heaven** because he became enamored with mortal **women** (Gen. 6:2). In I Enoch, he is the angel who taught mankind the impure arts of war, lapidary, and cosmetics. In the end, he is exiled to the desolate wilderness (I Enoch 9, 10, 13).

Aside from etymological discussions of the meaning of the word, Azazel appears as a demon in **Talmud** (Yoma 67b; RaSHI commentary) and medieval Midrashic sources, such as Yalkut Shimoni. In one text, Azazel is regarded to be the **serpent** that tricked **Adam** and **Eve** into sin. Some claim Azazel is an alternate name for other demonic personalities, such as **Samael**. In one **Midrash**, the goat offering to Azazel on Yom Kippur is a bribe that God requires Israel to give **Satan**/**Samael** every year in order that he will deliver a good report about Israel’s conduct when called to the celestial court (*Me’am Loez, Achrei Mot-Kedoshim*). *SEE* FALLEN ANGELS.

Azriel of Gerona: Mystic (Provencal, ca. 13th century). Azriel was a student of Isaac the Blind and the teacher of Nachmanides. Along with his contemporary Ezra ben Solomon, his teachings regarding the ten **sefirot** provided the foundations of speculative **Kabbalah**.

Azulai, Chayyim: Rabbi and Kabbalist (Turkish, ca. 18th century). Azulai was one of the leading rabbis of his generation and he held important positions among the

Jews of the Ottoman Empire. He was also a famed **amulet** maker and those samples that survive have been prized for their efficacy.

Azzah, Azael: A **fallen angel** in **I Enoch**, he opposes the transubstantiation of **Enoch** into **Metatron** in **III Enoch**. *SEE* UZZA.

[contents]

B



Baal: (בעל). “Lord/Master/Husband.” The chief active god of the Canaanite, Ugaritic, and Phoenician pantheons. A god of thunder and **fertility**, several biblical authors considered him YHVH’s chief rival for the loyalties of the people **Israel**. The **Bible** sometimes speaks of “baalim” in the plural. This may reflect the common custom of identifying a local spirit with Baal. Thus, in different places, the Bible mentions a Baal Hadad and a Baal Pe’or (“the lord god of Hadad” and “the lord god of Pe’or”).

Baal ha-Chalom: (בעל החלום). “Lord of Dreams.” Based on Job 33:14–18, Judaism identified an **Angel** of **dreams** (*Otzer Geonim* 4). The name of the angel varies from source to source. In the **Talmud**, it can also refer to a professional

oneiromancer (Ber. 56a–b). *SEE* Angel And Angelology; Divination; Dream; Sar Ha-Chalom.

Baal ha-Sod: (בעל הסוד). “Master of **secrets**.” A general, nontechnical moniker for a teacher of Jewish esoteric traditions.

Baal [Baalat] Ov: (בעל אב). “Master [Mistress] of Ov.” A **Necromancer**. This term first appears in the **Bible** in a list of forbidden occupations (Deut. 18). An **ov** is a familiar, a term that may be derived from Akkadian. It is also possible, though less likely, that an ov is a dead ancestral spirit. In that case the word is being derived from the Hebrew *avah*, “father,” the Arabic *aba*, “return,” or *aabi*, Hittite for “grave.” [1] According to the **Talmud**, a Baal Ov is a medium who causes the dead to speak, either through his own **Body** or, in the Mesopotamian custom, through a skull (Sanh. 65b; Shab. 152b–153a; Josephus, *Ant.* 4:4). *SEE* Death; Divination; Ghost; Medium; Necromancer And Necromancy; Possession, Ghostly; Xenoglossia And Automatic Writing.

1. Schmidt, *Israel’s Beneficent Dead*, 150–52; Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 3, 114.

Baal Shem: (בעל שם). “Master of the [Divine] Name.” An informal title given to wonderworkers and/or saints. From earliest Judaism it was believed that the **Names of God**, but most often the **Tetragrammaton**, could be manipulated for theurgic or magical purposes. The **Talmud** also teaches that truly **Righteous** persons have the power to bend God’s will to their own (M.K. 16b). Such people were sometimes called *anshei ma’aseh*, “men of [wondrous] deeds.”

The term “Baal Shem” for a wonderworker, however, is early medieval in origin. Though it was sometimes applied to religious poets, most people designated Baal Shems as either folk healers who used **Segulah or Segulot** cures, rainmakers, or the manufacturers of **amulet**. Some achieved fame as exorcists.[1]

Many writers used the term pejoratively, as synonymous with “quack” or “charlatan.” Even a marginal figure like **Abulafia, Abraham** looked down upon them. Some books of their cures and **incantations**, such as **Miflaot Elohim** (“The Wonders of God”), have been published in the modern era. The most famous of all *Baalei Shem* is **Israel ben Eliezer**, the founder of **Chasidism**.

1. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 310–11.

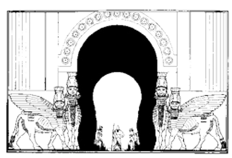
Baal Shem Tov: *SEE* Israel Ben Eliezer.

Baaras: A location in Israel which yields a mysterious magical root uniquely effective in extracting **demons**, if one can overcome its lethal touch while harvesting it (*War* 7:180–185).

Baba Sali: Kabbalist and **wunder-rabbi** (Moroccan, ca. 20th century). He was famous for his **healing** powers. His gravesite in southern Israel is still a popular place of pilgrimage.

Babel, Tower of: *SEE* Babel, Tower Of.

Babylon: (בבל). Derived from Akkadian: *Bab-ilum*, "Gate of Heaven." An ancient city-state empire centered in what is now Iraq. Supposedly founded at the command of the god Marduk, this city became the place of Jewish exile after 586 BCE. Babylon was a culture permeated with supernatural beliefs and magical practices. Under its hegemony in the years following the destruction of **Jerusalem**, Jews became increasingly preoccupied with such matters. **Astrology**, **divination**, the use of **amulet**, and the practice of **Magic** in a variety of forms, all became more pervasive folkways among Jews living in Iraq and Persia. Referring to the country as *Bavel* or *Shinar* interchangeably, the **Bible** repeatedly ridicules the pretensions of the Babylonians, especially in the fable of the **Babel, Tower of** (Gen. 11).



The Gates of Babylon with guardian Lamassu

Bachya ben Asher: Mystical **Bible** commentator (Spanish, ca. 13th–14th century). A student coming out of the circle of **Nachmanides**, his works include many occult teachings and esoteric interpretations of biblical episodes. Bachya particularly believed in the theurgic power of the **commandment**—that their proper performance empowered God, while **Sin** weakened God's power in the world.[1]

1. M. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, CT: Yale Press, 1988), 162–64.

Backwards: *SEE* Reversal (Magical).

Bahir, Sefer ha-: "The Book of Illumination." This document is the most influential early book in what would become the classical **Kabbalah** of the

Middle Ages. Though written in a Midrashic style and credited with great antiquity, it is more likely the work of early medieval Provencal mystics. Like the earlier **Yetzirah, Sefer**, the Bahir is deeply immersed in the supernal power of words and letters and wordplay and creative philology plays a major role in its esoteric oeuvre. The first description of the sefirotic **Tree of Life** appears in its pages. The concept of **reincarnation** is introduced in the form of cryptic parables. It is also one of the first works to treat the mundane *nomina* of the **Bible** as allegories for metaphysical realities. Thus, according to the Bahir, "**Abraham**" is really the divine attribute of **love**, and his saga recorded in Scripture is actually an **Allegory** for how God's love functions in the created realms. It expounds on divine names and their magical uses, as well as how to theurgically activate divine power through the performance of commandments.[1]

1. Dan and Kiener, *The Early Kabbalah*, 28–31; A. Green, *Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 16–18.

Bakol: (בכל). The daughter of **Abraham**. Her existence is derived from reading the verse, "And God blessed Abraham with בכל [everything] (Gen. 24:1)" as a pun: how could he have everything if he didn't have a daughter? (B.B. 47b, 16b; Gen. R. 59:7). The Bahir (78) regards her to be a supernal entity, either an ***angelus interpres*, wisdom, or the Shekhinah,** who grants Abraham insight into the cosmic order (Zohar I:223a. Also see Nachmanides' and Bachya's comments to Gen. 24:1).

Balaam ben Beor: Ancient gentile seer from Transjordan. An extended story about Balaam appears in Numbers 22–24. Balaam is summoned by the King of Moab to collectively curse the Israelites. Being on good terms with YHVH, Balaam initially refuses, but is eventually induced to go help the king. Riding on an **ass** to join the king, he is confronted by a **Sword**-wielding **Angel**. Once he arrives, rather than cursing Israel, he is instead possessed by God and pronounces four extended blessing oracles upon them.

Gnostics declared Balaam to be a **Prophet** of the High God of goodness, and an enemy of the God of Israel, whom they equated with the evil **Demiurge**. They interpret the conflict of these two deities as the cause of Balaam's various reversals of fortune. In the **Midrash**, Balaam is described as everything from a magician to a prophet. Based on the verse, "he knows the mind of the Most High" (Num. 24:16), one legend even declares him the greatest of the seven prophets God sent to the non-Jewish **Nations**, the gentile counterpart to **Moses** (B.B. 15b; Num. R. 20:1), perhaps even his superior (Sif. D. end). He is

generally, but not consistently, portrayed as a wicked conspirator against Israel; he is credited with giving **Pharaoh** the suggestion to drown the Israelite **children**. Another tradition treats him as the most evil practitioner of **Witch**; he even derived his power by **bestiality**—copulating with his donkey (Sanh. 105a–b; Zohar I:126a). It was commonly held in the Middle Ages that Balaam was also a master of **Astrology**. Renderings of him in illuminated manuscripts often showed him holding an astrolabe. **Raziel, Sefer** claims he knew the workings of the divine **Chariot** (B.B. 15b; Tanh. Balak; A.Z. 4a–b; Avot 5).

Baladan: (בלאדן). "Not a Man." A **dog**-faced **demons** mentioned in rabbinic literature (Sanh. 96a) and the **Zohar, Sefer ha-** (I:6b). The name is evidently derived from the biblical character, Merodach-Baladan (1 Sam. 39:1; 2 Kings 20:12). Isaac Safrin may also be referring to these same imps when he speaks of the "evil dog" who works against humanity (*Megillat Saterim*).

Balsam: (בושם/*Bosem*). The juice of this plant is extracted for medicinal and perfumery uses. It may also have been an ingredient in the **Incense** burned in the **Temple**. In the **World to Come**, thirteen streams of balsam **oil** will flow for the pleasure of the **Righteous** (Tan. 25a; Gen. R. 62:2; Zohar I:4b; Zohar II:127a). *SEE* Herbs And Vegetables; Pharmacopoeia.

BaN: (בן). An acronym for "52," a divine name appearing in **Chayyim, Sefer ha-'s** *Etz Hayyim.* The name is YHVH if each letter were given its full (*malei*) spelling: Yud H-H Vav H-H. It is sometimes used in a meditative permutation exercise.

Baneman: Yiddish, "changeling." A wood-and-straw doll that **demons** substitute for a living infant. The parents are enchanted so as to perceive the doll as living, while the actual infant is taken and raised to serve infernal forces (*Toldot Adam* sec. 80). *SEE* Banim Shovavim.

Banim Shovavim: (בנים שובבים). "Mischievous Sons." Originally used to describe wayward **children** (Jer. 3:22; Chag. 15a), it took on a supernatural interpretation, being used to refer to changelings who are the offspring of human-demonic couplings. The concept can be seen in biblical interpretations of **Cain** that assume he had dual parentage through both **Adam** and the edenic **serpent** (*Chochmat ha-Nefesh,* 26c), whom the **Talmud** suspects copulated with Eve:

> When Adam, doing penance for his sin, separated from Eve for 130 years, he, by impure desire, caused the earth to be filled with shedim, lilin, and evil

spirits. (Gen. R. 20; Eruv. 18b)

Incubi and succubae presumably continue to haunt men and **women**, appropriating their procreative powers to replenishing the ranks in every generation.

There seem to be two threads to this tradition. One assumes that such demonoid beings are the seemingly normal people who reveal their hybrid natures when they engage in heinous acts, while the other envisions these "sons" as spirits. All these creatures are a threat to the moral children of their parent and the demonic offspring must be redeemed by means of a graveside ritual of **incantations** and magical **Circle** (*Tikkun Shovavim*).[1] *SEE* Demons; Nocturnal Emission.

1. G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1965), 154–56.

Banquet, Messianic: (סעודה של לויתן). "The Meal of Leviathan." Inspired by Job 41:6, one of the most popular mythic images of the reward awaiting the **Righteous** in the **World to Come** is the *Seudah shel Livyatan,* the messianic banquet (PdRE 10). There the great **Chaos** monsters, **Ziz**, **Behemoth**, and **Leviathan**, will finally be slaughtered for the enjoyment of all. In one version of this legend, there were originally two Leviathans. God killed the first in primordial times and salted away the meat for the banquet. The other sea monster will be served fresh (B.B. 74b; PR 16:4, 48:3; Mid. Teh. 14:7). The banquet appears in *Akdamut,* the 11th-century poem sung on the holiday of **Shavuot**:

And each righteous one under his canopy will sit,
In the Sukkah made from the skin of Leviathan,
And in the future
He will make a dance for the righteous ones,
And a banquet in Paradise,
From that Leviathan and the Wild Ox,
And from the wine preserved from the Creation—
Happy are those who believe and hope and
Never abandon their faith forever!

The subtext of this **myth** is that in messianic times the last forces of destruction, **Chaos** , and entropy will finally be swept away, and the world will achieve its perfect state.

Bar Hedya (or Hadaya): Talmudic oneiromancer (ca. 4th century). He is portrayed as a man of doubtful character whose interpretations depended on the amount of

money paid him. The story of Bar Hedya also features a humorous episode about one of his predictions that came to pass: Rava was told by Bar Hedya that his **dream** signified he would be hit twice with a club. The Sage is in fact later attacked, but averts a third blow by declaring to his attacker, “Enough! I saw only two [blows] in my dream!” This suggestive story may help explain Bar Hedya’s maxim, “All dreams follow the interpretation.” In other words, dream interpretations are no more than self-fulfilling prophecies (Ber. 56a–b).

Bar Jesus: A Jewish magician mentioned in the Christian Scriptures (Acts 13:6–11).

Bar Nifli: (בר נפלי). “Son of the Clouds.” A messianic figure, based on the book of Daniel (7:13), described in IV Ezra, Babylonian **Talmud**, and Targum Yerushalmi. *SEE* Messiah.

Bar Yochai: (בר יוכי). A gigantic Roc-like bird mentioned in **Talmud** (Bik. 57a; Yoma 80a; Suk. 5a–b). Some stories of this bird overlap those of the **Ziz**.

Baradiel: (ברדיאל). “Hail of God.” The **Angel** of **Hail** (I Enoch). He is one of the “seven wondrous, honored princes” and governs the third **Heaven** (III Enoch).

Baraita de Yosef ben Uziel: This esoteric commentary on **Yetzirah, Sefer**, pseudepigraphically ascribed to the authorship of the mysterious Joseph ben Uziel, grandson of the prophet **Jeremiah**, was an important text created within the mystic Circle of the Unique Cherub.[1]

1. Dan and Kiener, *The Early Kabbalah*, 24; Also see Dan, *The ‘Unique Cherub’ Circle*, 59–79.

Baraita mi-Pirke Merkavah: “Tradition from the Chapters of the Chariot.” A book of **Ma’asei-Merkavah**.

Barakiel or Baraqiel: (ברקאל). “Lightning of God.” The **Angel** of lightning (I Enoch, PdRE 8, Zohar II:252b). One of the “Seven Princes” of **Heaven** (III Enoch).

Barkayal: The **Fallen Angels** who taught **Astrology** to humanity (I Enoch 8).

Barminan: (בר מינן). “Far from Us.” An expression meant to ward off the **evil eye** (think in terms of the **Prayer** of the rabbi in *Fiddler on the Roof*: “God, bless and keep the Czar—far away from us!”). It can also be used as a euphemism for a dead **Body**.

Barnacle Geese: Fantastic **Birds** thought to metamorphose from **Shell**. Christians used this creature as an **Allegory** for Jewish conversion to **Christianity** (a humble shellfish can be transformed into a beautiful bird). Jewish versions of the barnacle geese legend have them growing on **Trees** (Zohar III:156).

Barrenness: *SEE* Fertility.

Baruch, Apocalypse of or Book of: A cluster of pseudepigraphic works, with different versions existing in Greek and Syriac, claiming to be **Baruch ben Neriah**'s firsthand accounts of the destruction of the earthly **Jerusalem**and his ascension to the heavenly Jerusalem. In one **vision**, Jerusalem is actually destroyed by angelic forces rather than Babylonians. Then the sacred vessels of the **Temple** are secreted away, after which the spirit of **Prophecy** seizes Baruch and he experiences eschatological visions. This is how the Syriac version ends. The Greek version picks up with Baruch ascending bodily into the **Seven Heavens**, where he sees fantastic visions of the past, the future, hell, and the celestial workings. Both versions, though evidently of Jewish origin, have been so heavily reworked by Christian writers that it is difficult to tell what is original and what has been superimposed on the text over time.[1]

1. Metzger and Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 76–77.

Baruch ben Neriah: Secretary to the prophet **Jeremiah** (ca. 6th century BCE). Like many other peripheral characters that appear in Scripture, Baruch becomes a prominent figure in Jewish occult tradition. He becomes the protagonist of the **Apocalypse of Baruch**. The Rabbis identify him with the character **Ebed Melech** mentioned in the book of Jeremiah, making him an Ethiopian (PdRE 53). Counted as a **Prophet** by some Sages, later legends claim his **Body** experienced a saintly **Death** untouched by decay. His grave was a place of highest sanctity; like the **Ark of the Covenant**, those who touched it died. Other stories have him ascend bodily into **Heaven**, like **Elijah**. (Meg. 14b, 15a; Sif. Num. 99; II *Baruch*). *SEE* Righteous, THE.

Baruch She 'Amar: (ברוך שאמר). A liturgical hymn recited on the **Sabbath** morning. Consisting of ten stanzas, **Chayyim, Sefer ha-** taught that one should contemplate the ten **sefirot** in sequence with the singing, an act of elevating the **Soul** through intention. The **Prayer** serves as a pivot point in Luria's model of the four world worship, for it is the prayer that lifts the worshipper beyond the world of Asiyah into the higher state of Yetzirah (*Sha'ar Kavvanot* I). In time the Lurianic **siddur**, *Nusach ha-Ari*, adopted a thirteen-stanza version of the hymn,

to mirror the thirteen divine attributes (Ex. 34).[1]

1. M. Hallamish, *Ha-Kabbalah b'Tefillah, b'Halakhah, uv'Minhag* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2000), 33.

Bashert: (uבשרת). "Destiny." A term for something perceived as inevitable, or meant to be. This term has a decidedly positive connotation, and is most often used in reference to a good **Wedding** match.

Bat: Not mentioned in the **Bible**, in rabbinic literature the bat is a shape-shifting creature that takes a number of forms over time but eventually morphs into a **demons** (B.K. 16a). *SEE* Animals.

Bat Kol: (בת קל). "Daughter of a Voice/[Heavenly] Echo." A minor form of revelation described in **Talmud** and later Jewish literature:

> Our Rabbis taught: Since the death of the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel; yet they were still able to avail themselves of the Bat Kol. Once when the rabbis met in the upper chamber of Gurya's house at Jericho, a Bat Kol was heard from Heaven, saying: "There is one amongst you who is worthy that the Shekhinah should rest on him as it did on Moses, but his generation does not merit it." The Sages present set their eyes on Hillel the Elder. (Sanh. 11a)

Not prophetic in the prescient sense, instead it proclaims God's will, **judgment**, or in the above example, God's regret (Ber. 3a).

It appears most famously in the miraculous duel between Rabbi Eliezer and the Sages (B.M. 59b; J. Ber. 2). It sometimes is heard extolling the **Righteous** at the time of their death, and will be heard by the newly resurrected when they arise from the grave (Zohar I:118a). By the Middle Ages, it becomes equated with attaining a mystical state of communion (*Kuzari* 3:11). *SEE* Prophecy And Prophets; Vision.

Batraal: A **Fallen Angels** mentioned in **I Enoch**, chapter 7.

Batya: (בתיה). "Daughter of Yah." The daughter of **Pharaoh**, she adopted the infant **Moses**. Later she repudiates **Idolatry** and marries the Israelite Caleb (1 Chron. 4:15, 18). One interpretation concludes she had the spirit of **Prophecy** in her and knew she was raising an agent of God (*Aggadat Yam Talmud*). Others state she was at the river to treat her **Leprosy** and was moved by pure compassion to spare the child (Sot. 12b; Ex. R. 1:23). Regardless, this act of adoption meant God adopted her in return, earning her the name "daughter of

Yah” (Lev. R. 1:3), and counted an Israelite (Meg. 13b). One oft-repeated tradition is that God miraculously extended her arm, ala Mr. Fantastic, to pull the child to safety. One claim puts her reach at 60 cubits (**Bachya ben Asher**’s comment to Exodus 2:5). She is one of the select few who ascended to **Heaven** without tasting **Death**. In **Eden**she rules over one of the **palaces** of the righteous dead (Meg. 13a; Ex. R. 1, 18).

Beard: *SEE* Hair.

Beard of Faith: The beard that is described as adorning the “**Ancient of Days**” in Daniel. Since the “glory of the face is the beard” (Shab. 152a), the divine “beard,” whether assigned as an attribute to the Zeir Anpin or Atika Kadisha within the Pleroma, is part of the divine **Glory** and subject to elaborate, at time inscrutable, metaphysical speculation. It has thirteen locks (*tikkunim*), conduits for the thirteen divine attributes of Exodus 33 that stream into the material world, as well as the thirteen “rivers of balsam” that await the righteous in the **World to Come** (S of S 5:13; Zohar II:177a–b, 122b; Zohar III:130b, 139a–140b).[1]

1. P. Giller, *Reading the Zohar: The Sacred Text of the Kabbalah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 116–119.

Beelzebub: (בעל זבוב). A **demons**. He is first mentioned as a Phoenician god in 2 Kings 1. His name probably derives from Ugaritic “Lord Baal,” though it is often translated as “Lord of Flies.” By Greco-Roman times he is a demon lord and he is mentioned in Christian Scriptures (Matt. 12:24–27). He may be the same as Belzebouel, who appears in the **Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS)**.

Beer Shachat: (באר שחת). “Well of Destruction.” A term derived from Psalm 55:24, it is one of the seven compartments of **Gehenna**, the destination of the “wicked **Nations**.” Kushiel is its principle **Angel** (*Masechet Gehinnom*).

Behemoth: (בהמות). A mythical beast mentioned in Job 40:15–24 and Psalm 50:10, which calls him the first of God’s creations. Other sources insist he was created on the sixth day (Mid. Konen). Behemoth drinks up all the waters that flow from Paradise (PR 16:4, 48:3). He is so big he sits on a thousand mountains (Ps. 50:10; Zohar I:18b). His bones are hard as tubes of bronze and his limbs are like **Iron** rods.

At the end of time he will do battle with **Leviathan**, a battle neither will survive. In the World to Come, he will be an entrée at the messianic banquet (II

Esdras 6:52; B.B. 74b; Lev. R. 13:3, 22:10; PdRE 11). In Zohar, the beast sometimes symbolizes the Shekhinah (Zohar I: 223b). Behemoth is often portrayed in medieval Jewish illuminated manuscripts as an ox of gigantic proportions. *SEE* Animals.

Beinonim: (בינונים). "The In-betweens/the Doubtful." Starting in **Talmud** (Ber. 7a; R.H. 16b) and highlighted in III Enoch, it is the designation for those who are neither pious, *tzadikim*, nor evil, *rashaim*. The bulk of humanity, the *Beinonim*, are those whose **Fate** in the afterlife is still in question. The condition and rectification of the *Beinonim* is the topic of the first chapter of the Tanya, and serves as the premise for the chapters that follow. (*Tanya*, Sefer Shel Beinonim).

Beit El Circle: This **Jerusalem**-based kabbalistic fellowship has been one of the most influential Jewish mystical movements among Sefardi and Hasidic Jews since its start under the leadership of the Yemenite mystic Shalom Sha'bari in the mid-18th century. The circle focuses on the teachings of Isaac Luria as recorded by Chayyim Vital. The academy that Sha'bari nurtured emphasized a curriculum of mixed **Kabbalah**, **Talmud**, and medieval philosophy. Arranged in around-the-clock "watches" so that **study** would be going on perpetually, the Beit El system cultivated in the adherents a vigorous lifestyle centered on study, **Prayer**, and contemplation. The adherents go so far as to wear two sets of **tefillin** simultaneously during daylight hours, in order to honor the differing practices of two famous sages. The circle continues into the 21st century.[1]

Prayer is the emphasized rite of the group, and the Beit El philosophy teaches the extensive use of kavvanot**,** ritualized concentration, in prayer, as well as contemplating divine names, as means to achieve devekut, union with God. The group has been usually preoccupied with the proper observance of the biblical system of *shemittah* and *yovel*, sabbatical and jubilee years.[2]

1. L. Jacobs, *The Jewish Mystics* (London: Kyle Cathie, 1990), 156–169.
2. Ibid.

Beit ha-Midrash, heavenly: *SEE* Yeshiva Shel Malah.

Beit Shean: This town at the south side of the juncture of the Jezreel and the Jordan valleys is the gate to **Eden** (Eruv. 19a).

Bela ben B'or: (בלע בן בעור). "Devourer Son of Consumption." First of the eight Edomite kings who "ruled before there was a king in Israel" (Gen. 36:31–39). In

the Lurianic creation **myth**, the “eight kings” are an **Allegory**, and Bela is Knowledge, the first vessel to shatter, releasing **evil** into the cosmos.

Beli Ayin ha-Ra: (בלי עין הרע). “No **evil eye**!” An adjuration against witchcraft.

Belial: (בליעל). “Worthless.” Belial is a **demons** mentioned in the **Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS)**, apocryphal books, and the Gospels. As is so often the case, the word appears in the **Bible** as an adjective, meaning “worthless” (1 Sam. 10:27) and/or rebellious person (Job 34:18), but in post-biblical tradition becomes reified as an entity, place, or supernatural force (see, for example, Abaddon and Ketev Meriri). **Talmud** Baba Batra 10a uses the word ambiguously, so that the reader could infer the term to mean either “worthlessness” or “devil.” Based on the Book of Jubilee’s description of him as the accuser and tempter (1:20. Also see *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,* Reuben 2), Belial may be an alternative name for **Samael, Satan, ha-Satan**, or a conflation with both. In some medieval works, Belial gives birth to Armilus.

Belimah: (בלימה). A term that may or may not first appear in Job 26:7, where *b’li-mah* seems to mean “emptiness.” As used in Sefer Yetzirah to refer to the **sefirot** prior to their unfolding, it means either “containment/restraint” (the divine restraint that pre-existed the **Emanation**) or “**Silence**” (the cosmic silence that preceded God’s first words, “Let there be light”).[1] Other interpretations referencing the passage in Job, divide it into two words, בלי מה/*b’li-mah*, “without whatness,” in the sense of “without substance.” Thus *Belimah* becomes associated with **Keter**, the first emanation.

Other works, such as Baraita de Yosef ben Uziel, understand it as a reference to the ten metaphysical concepts the average Jew is forbidden to investigate: what is before Creation, after the **judgment**, the reward of the righteous, the punishment of the wicked, and the remotest ends of what is up, down, east, west, north, and south. As this encyclopedia reveals, this prohibition is mostly honored through the breach.

1. Green, *Guide to the Zohar*, 54; A. Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah: The Book of Formation* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1978), 25–26.

Bell: Bells appear in a significant role only during biblical times, when the High **priest** was required to wear them on the hem of his **Ephod** (**Seventy-Two** of them according to the **Talmud**):

> You shall make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue wool. Its collar shall be folded over within. It shall have a woven border around its opening … it may

> not be frayed. On its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet wool, on its hem all around. Between them, there shall be gold bells all around … It must be on Aaron when he serves; so that its sound is heard when he enters the Holy before Adonai. (Ex. 28:31–35)

These bells served to placate or drive back the **Guardian Angels** (*Sar ha-Panim*) that surround the **Ark of the Covenant** when the high priest enters the **Holy of Holies** on **Yom Kippur** (*Az be-En Kol* piyut). **Lilith** is compared to a "golden bell" that disturbs men in their **Sleep** (Gen. R. 18.4). Unlike Christian-based theurgic practices, bells do not appear to have been used much by Jewish practitioners.

Belomancy: The casting of arrows for the purposes of divination is well attested to in Semitic cultures surrounding Israel. Not only do Akkadian and Arabic documents refer to it, but archaeologists have found bronze arrowheads with the inscription *chetz* (arrow) on them. Since inscribing an arrow with the word "arrow" seems pointless, at least one scholar speculates that the word is meant as a pun of the Ugaritic word for "luck." [1]

The practice of belomancy is explicitly mentioned twice in Hebrew Scriptures, once with condemnation (Ezek. 21:26), the other as a legitimate way for a **Prophet** to discern the future (2 Kings 13:14–19). It is alluded to in another passage (1 Sam. 20:19–22). This third passage may be meant as satire, showing it (and the interpretation of word **omen** in general) to be nothing more than a sleight-of-hand trick to convey messages already known to the practitioner.

The methods of belomancy vary. According to Ezekiel, a bundle of arrows is shaken and then cast down, possibly in front of an **Idol**. The pattern in which they fall was presumably interpreted, I Ching fashion, by the *baru* (diviner). Arab sources suggest that arrows (usually three, just as described in the 1 Samuel passage) were shot, and the message then derived from the pattern of their landing.

1. Singer, *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, 307; Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 3, 114–15.

Ben Azzai, Simon: Talmudic Sage and mystic (ca. 2nd century). Several sources report that when Ben Azzai expounded **Torah**, the flames of **Sinai** enveloped him:

> Once, when Ben Azzai was interpreting Scriptures, flames blazed up around him, and when asked whether he was a student of the mysteries of the "Chariot of God," he replied, "Like pearls, I string together words of the

Torah with those of the Prophets; those of the Prophets with those of the Writings; and thus the words of the Torah rejoice as on the day when they were revealed in the flames of Sinai.” (Lev. R. 16; S of S R. 1.10)

He is one of the **Four Sages** who entered **Pardes or PaRDeS**. According to the account in Chagigah 14b, “He looked and died.” Genesis Rabbah takes this as a **sign** of his piety; for he is credited with saying that the pious see the rewards awaiting them in the moments before their **Death**. The Sages taught, “He who sees Ben Azzai in a dream is assured piety” (Ber. 57b).

Ben Stada: A practitioner of **witchcraft** mentioned in **Talmud** (B. Shab. 104b). He derived his knowledge from **Egypt**, one of the great sources of arcane knowledge (Sanh. 67a; Ka. 1:16).

Ben Temalion: A beneficent **demon** that helped a group of Jews, led by Simon bar Yochai, sent as emissaries to Rome. He did this by first possessing the daughter of Caesar, then allowing Bar Yochai to perform an **exorcism** on her. When Ben Temalion finally left her **Body**, Bar Yochai earned Caesar’s gratitude and his cooperation (Me. 17b). Among medieval Jews of the Rhineland, “ben Temalion” becomes an idiom for any mischievous spirit.[1]

1. Singer, *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, 257.

Ben Zoma, Simon: Talmudic Sage and mystic (ca. 2nd century). He is one of the **Four Sages** who entered **Pardes or PaRDeS**. The experience drove him mad (Chag. 14b). Prior to this misadventure, Ben Zoma was noted for his obsession with **Ma’asei-Bereshit**, the mysteries of Creation. So powerful was his hold over the imagination of the Sages that the **Talmud** offers this promise, “He who sees … Ben Zoma in a dream is assured of **wisdom**” (Ber. 57b).

Bereshit: (בראשית). “When God Created …” This first word of the first book of the **Bible** serves both as the Hebrew name for the book Genesis and as an idiom for “Creation.” Because of its pride of position at the “start” of creation, as well as its uniqueness (the word never appears again in Scriptures), the word is subjected to intensive and varied exegetical analysis. Many, many meanings are derived from this one six-letter word.

Since the time of **RaSHI**, it has been widely understood that the conventional sequential translation, “In the beginning …” is inaccurate. *Bereshit* is a construct, not absolute form, so a temporal “When [God] began to …” is more accurate. So already on the merely syntactical level the word has its

complexities. But Jewish tradition has also held the six letters contain **secrets** that the wise will understand. For example, by making a **Notarikon** (in this case, separating the word into two words, it yields:

ברא שית He created six [things] … (Gen. R. 1:4; MhG)

A secret is revealed—six critical entities preceded the actual creation of **Heaven** and **Earth**: The **Throne of Glory** [positive existence], **Torah** [the blueprint for existence], the **ancestors** [the righteous **pillars** that support existence], the concept of the **Temple** [the link between worlds], and the name of **Messiah** [redemption and rectification].

Although the Torah itself suggests that certain hylic entities coexisted with God at the beginning (**water**, **darkness**), by separating out the diacritical *dagesh* [it is the dot in the first letter] from the word and treating it as a metaphysical symbol, the exegete reads it as:

Beginning with a point … ב • ראשית/*b' reshit*], (Zohar I:15a)

and from this the Zohar demonstrates the philosophic principle creation *ex nihilo* [from nothing] in the first word. The author of the Zohar also finds hints of the sefirotic structure in the first sentence, *Bereshit bara Elohim*:

> With Wisdom [*reishit* = Chochmah, a claim based on Proverbs 8:22; 3:18], the Infinite [= Keter, the subject being implicit in the verb form bara] created Elohim [= Binah].

In a different vein, all Jewish **mysticism** takes very seriously the pathos (the caring) of God. **Kabbalah** emphasizes that God is driven by a "need" to create and relate to that creation, an idea scandalous to rationalist philosophy, which posits that God must be impassive. Rearranging the six letters yields a phrase that reveals that creation is a:

תאב שיר/A song of desire (Attributed to Isaac Luria)

and confirms the mystical premise of a deity longing for us.

These are just a few examples. Tikkunei Zohar alone has seventy *d'rashot* on the word *Bereshit*. But this kind of freeform interpretation creates other problems for the tradition. For example, Christians can play this game too. The six letters can be regrouped to spell out: *father; son; fire* [equaling the **Holy Spirit**, though the association seems tenuous]; *fortunate daughter* [i.e., the Virgin Mary]; even *crucifixion on the sixth day*. This last element is based on an alphabetically/morphological pun: the **Hebrew** *Tav*, the sixth letter in the word,

is the equivalent of the Greek *tau* … which is cross-shaped (*De Naturis Rerum*, a commentary by 12th-century monk Alexander Neckham).

Christian exegetical demonstrations like this may in part explain the gradual Jewish shift to more contextual, plain-sense [*Pashat*] interpretations of the Hebrew Bible favored by later generations of commentators such as **RaSHI**, David Kimhi, and Sforno; contextual readings offer less chance of having one's own hermeneutics used against one. *SEE* CHAOS; CREATION; MA'ASEI-BERESHIT.

Beriyah, World of: (בריאה). "Creation." The second of the **four worlds of emanation**, this is the level in which positive existence emerges. It encompasses the "lower" worlds of **Yetzirah** and **Asiyah**. Some traditions associate this with the highest orders of **Angels** and the **Throne of Glory**. As the first world that is "created" rather than purely "emanated," it is said to function as the first **garment** concealing the supernal shefa of God's creative force. It is, nonetheless, a realm of pure intellect and the place from which human reason emanates. It is also the domain of pure **law** (*Etz Chayyim*). Jewish word **mysticism** also associates it with the first letter *hay* in the **Tetragrammaton**, the four-letter name of God.

Beruchim, Abraham: Kabbalist (North African, ca. 16th century). He advocated the mystical discipline of midnight **study** and**Prayer**. He was such a severe advocate of repentance that he was believed by many to be the **reincarnation** of the prophet **Jeremiah**.

Berudim: (ברודים). "Spots." In the Lurianic cosmic-allegorical interpretation of Genesis 31:10, this refers to **Yetzirah**, the World of Emanation.

BeSHT: *SEE* ISRAEL BEN ELIEZER.

Bestiality: Sexual relations with animals are explicitly forbidden by the **Torah** (Lev. 18). Stories of inter-species intercourse do, however, appear in Jewish literature. The most famous of these is a Talmudic reference to **Eve** copulating with the **serpent** (Shab. 146a). There is also a more obscure tradition that **Adam** first gave vent to his libido with God's other creations, a story that serves as an etiological rationale as to why God felt compelled to create a female partner for him. One Midrash claims that antediluvian people engaged in bestiality with all the land creatures, thereby contributing to the absolute corruption of all **Creation**, requiring the great **Flood** to purge the **Earth** of this obscenity (Gen. 6;

Eruv. 18b). Interestingly, as in Greco-Roman religions, such tales of bestiality are mostly set in the mythic past.

Bestiality is closely associated in the Talmudic imagination with **witchcraft**, and the Sages believed that it was through intercourse with animals that **Balaam** gained his infernal powers (Sanh. 105a–b; Zohar I:126a).

Thus in **Talmud**, there are several apparently earnest discussions as to whether a Jew should let a Pagan serve as a bailiff for Jewish livestock, out of fear the animals will be used for immoral/infernal purposes. It would be easy to assume that these are simply cases of Jews stereotyping their neighbors, but the fairly frequent representation of human-animal coupling on Greek pornographic urns might suggest and explanation for the Talmud's preoccupation with this issue.[1]

1. S. Deacy and K. Pierce, eds. *Rape in Antiquity: Sexual Violence in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (London: Duckworth, 2002), 69–96. Also see P. Mathieu, *Sex Pots: Eroticism in Ceramics* (New York: A & C Black, 2003).

Bet: (ב). Second letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**. It has the numeric value of two. It is the first letter appearing in the **Torah**. According to Genesis Rabbah, the shape of the letter (closed above, below, and on one side, with only one side open) is meant to teach that a person should not engage in speculation about what is above, below, or precedes **Creation**; a lesson respectfully but more or less completely ignored by the author of this book. Based on its numeric value, it reveals that God created two worlds simultaneously:

> Rabbi Yehudah ben Pazzi explained according to Bar Kappara: Why was the world created with a *bet?* To teach you there are two worlds: this world and the world to come. Another interpetation: Why [begin] with a *bet*? Because *bet* is the **language** of *berachah/*"blessing." And why not with an *alef?* Because *alef* is the language of *arur/*"cursing." (Gen. R. 1.9)

According to Deuteronomy Rabbah, the *bet* at the beginning of Torah (with its value of 2) teaches us about the inherent duality of Creation (2:31).[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 43–54.

Beth (or Beit) Alfa: This archaeological site of an ancient **synagogue** (ca. 4th–5th century CE) is most notable for the richly decorated mosaic floor consisting of numerous Jewish motifs surrounding an elaborate **zodiac** at the center. The most puzzling element of this display is that **Helios**, the Greek god of the **sun**, is clearly represented there in the hub of the design.[1]

1. M. Avi-Yonah, *The Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 187–90.

Beth El: "House of God." The location, near biblical **Luz**, where **Jacob** had his **dream** of a stairway to **Heaven** (Gen. 29). It would later become a sacred center for the early cult of YHVH. The story of Jacob's dream may have been meant to provide an etiology for why the shrine was established at that location.

Betulah: (בתולה). "Virgin"/Virgo." The **zodiac** sign for the month of Elul. This sign signifies the **Earth**, **night**, sensuality, materiality, and the feminine principle.[1]

1. Erlanger, *Signs of the Times*, 99–120.

Bezalel: (בצלאל). "In the Shadow of God." This Israelite craftsman, "filled with the spirit of God," was primarily responsible for the construction of the **tabernacle** (Ex. 24–25). Bezalel was identified as a gifted artisan in the **Bible**, and legends of his fantastic skills multiplied.

So great was his insight into God's intention that the Sages dubbed him the *R'aiah*, the Seer, along with other honorific names. Bezalel built the tabernacle according to a heavenly pattern shown to him. He could do this because he knew how to manipulate the **Hebrew alphabet** to unleash its supernal powers, just as God used them to create the universe (Ber. 55a; Zohar I: 9a). This legend is related to the widely held belief that the tabernacle was itself a model of the cosmos (Num. R. 12:13). The medievals credited his talent as a metallurgist to his knowledge of **Alchemy**.

Bible: (תנך/*TaNaKH* also מקרא/*mikra*). TaNaKH is an **acrostic** for the three divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures: *Torah*, *Neviim*, and *Ketuvim* (Pentateuch, Prophets, and Writings). This arrangement also roughly reflects the decreasing degree of divine inspiration credited to each book, with Torah being the most direct of God's revelations and the Writings generally credited to the more modest influence of the Ruach Elohim, the "**Holy Spirit**." The Hebrew Scriptures consist of thirty-nine canonical books (there are other methods of counting the collection, including treating the twelve minor prophets as a single book). The authoritative collection emerged out of a little-understood and mysterious process of canonization, a canonization not completed until at least the end of the 2nd century CE.

The Bible also mentions within its pages several other mysterious lost books. These include the Book of Jashar, the Book of the Wars of the Lord, and the royal chronicles of both Judah and Israel.

Like any other Jewish tradition, Jewish esoteric traditions look to ground themselves and justify their teachings in the authority and authenticity of Scripture. And certainly, the Hebrew Bible provides plenty of obvious examples of the fabulous: **Angels**, **giants** (Gen. 6), miraculous staves (Ex. 7), and monsters (Ps. 74). But the logic of the occult assumes that for all the wonders and forces that are visible and revealed, there are much more powerful things in the text which are concealed and must be detected. There are multiple proof texts for this premise, such as Psalm 62, "One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard," and Proverbs 25:2: "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is a glory of kings" (Also see Job 28; Prov. 25:11; Deut. 29:28). Thus, before the rise of Protestantism with its hermeneutic conceit that the meaning of the Scriptures was mono-vocalic, explicit, and self-evident, the Bible was widely regarded by both Jews and Christians to be a cryptic text: multi-vocalic, filled with layers of meanings, occult **secrets**, and powers that had to be extracted hermeneutically, or filled with teachings not meant for the masses. These secrets are concealed in the laws and stories by means of hints, allusions, allegories, and are even encoded into the very **language** itself. In fact, the more difficult the message was to ascertain, the more precious it was to be considered.[1]

This perception of the Bible as an exoteric text is illustrated in a famous legend that the **Earth** trembled when Onkelos the Proselyte and Jonathan ben Uziel first translated the Scriptures from the Holy Tongue (**Hebrew**) into popular Aramaic. When Ben Uziel further dared to make explicit the esoteric meanings embedded in Scriptures through his translations, a heavenly voice ordered him to stop (Meg. 3a; *En Yaakov*).

Evidence that the words of Scripture were held to have numinous and apotropaic powers already begins in biblical times, as indicated by the discovery of **metal amulets** inscribed with the Priestly Blessing ("The Lord bless and guard you …") dating from the Monarchy period. **Tefillin** and **mezuzahs**, both of which contain biblical texts, were similarly credited with offering protection to their users (Ber. 23b; S o S R. 3:7; Num. R. 12). Reciting Psalm 91 came to be regarded as the first line of defense against **demons**. In the Middle Ages, a scroll or book of Scriptural verses would be placed at the head of a crib to protect an infant.

Despite the words of Rabbi **Akiba**, who declared that all those who use Bible verses for spells have no place in the **World to Come** (M. Sanh. 10:1), many biblical verses, such as Exodus 15:26, were used as **healing incantations**. In

order to heal a seriously ill person, one might look in a book of Scripture, take the first word the eye falls upon, and add that word to the ailing person's **name**. Biblical names, words, and phrases appear on virtually every inscribed amulet. Perhaps the most frequently used verses in a theurgic context are Genesis 49:18, Zechariah 3:2, and Numbers 6:24–26. Psalms were particularly popular in this regard. An entire book, Shimmush Tehillim, "Useful Psalms," is devoted to cataloging verses for treating various conditions.

Passages would also be recited over crops to increase **fertility** and over property to protect it. According to **Chayyim Vital**, one can read and pronounce Scripture in such a way that it draws down an **Angel** that grants the summoner further revelations of secrets contained in the text (*Sha'ar ha-Nevuah* 2).

In classic magical fashion, verses were often read both forward and in reverse, or in **permutations**. Scriptures can also be used for purposes of **divination**. *SEE* BIBLIOMANCY; CODES; HEBREW AND HEBREW ALPHABET; PSALMS; TEMURAH; TORAH; TZERUF/Tzerufim.

1. J. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 14–16. Also see F. Talmage, "Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Texts in Medieval Judaism," in *Jewish Spirituality*, A. Green, ed., vol. 1 (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 313–355.

Bibliomancy: (שאלת ספר /*Sheilat Sefer*). Using sacred Scriptures as a means of **divination**. Above and beyond the familiar interpretative tradition that finds references to current events in the words of the **Prophets**. This kind of interpretation can be found in the **pesher** commentaries found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. And, of course, it is still a popular way to interpret the book of Revelations among some contemporary Evangelical Christians.

A verse can also be selected at random in the hopes of receiving an ominous message (Chag. 15a; SA Yoreh Deah 179:4). Some Sages believed in the mantic science of **kleidon**, treating the serendipitous overhearing of verses recited by school **children** as **omens** :

> Says Rabbi Johanan, "It is clear that I have a Master in Babylon; I must go and see him." So he said to a child, "Tell me the verse you have learnt." He answered, "Now Samuel was dead." Said [R. Johanan], "This means that Samuel has died." But it was not the case; Samuel was not dead then, and [this revealed] only that R. Johanan should not trouble himself [to go]. (Chul. 95b; also see Git. 58a)

The **Baal Shem Tov** compares the **Bible** to the Urim and Thummim as a potential source of mantic knowledge (*Sod Yakhim u'Vo'az*).

Binah: (בינה). “Understanding/Insight.” In the sefirotic system, Binah is the offspring and compliment to **Chochmah**. It is the dark receptacle of Chochmah’s **light**, the female counterpart to its masculine principle (Zohar III:290a), though in principle it also holds “masculine” qualities. It suckles the lower worlds. As such, it is also called *Ima*, “Mother,” and *Heichal*, “**Palace**.” It is the womb of God’s light, giving birth to all the “lower” **sefirot**.[1] Binah is one of the root aspects of the **Tree of Life**. It is also, however, the beginning of **judgment** because it is the beginning of division (Bahir 186*)*. In the context of Jewish ritual, Binah is associated with the Holy Ark, which contains the Torah. Removing the Torah from its concealment activates the divine flow from Binah to Tiferet (*Or ha-Yashar*).

1. H. Eilberg-Schwartz, ed. *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 119–120.

Binush, Binyamin, of Krotoszyn: (Polish, 1660?–1730). Wandering **Baal Shem** and author of two books: a magical manual, **Sefer** Amtachat Binyamin, and a collection of Lurianic **healing Prayers**, Shem Tov Katan. He was famed for his efficacious **amulets**, especially ones for the protection of **women** during and after **childbirth**.

Birds: (צפור/*Tzipor; Oaf*). Birds are a symbol of immortality and the **Soul**. Studying the behavior of birds was a form of **divination** most popular among the Hittites.[1] Since biblical times, Jews have also regarded birds as portending the future. According to one strand of tradition, human souls take the form of birds in **Heaven** (*Baruch Apocalypse* 10; *SGE*). The Vilna Gaon, in his mystical interpretation of the book of Jonah, also teaches that a **dove** symbolizes the transmigrating human soul. *SEE* ANIMAL; HOOPOE; MILHAM BIRD; PHOENIX; ZIZ.

1. Hallo and Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, 206; Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 3, 114.

Bird’s Nest: *SEE* PALACE OF THE BIRD’S NEST.

Birth: *SEE* CHILDBIRTH

Birth Pangs of the Messiah: (חבלי המשיח/*Chevlei ha-Mashiach).* This refers to the various tribulations and disturbances—political, social, and cosmic—that precede the coming of the Messiah (Shab. 118a; Sanh. 98a).

Bitachon, Sefer ha-: This esoteric work by the little-known Iyyun Circle includes passages on the creation of a **golem**.

Bitter Destruction: (קטב מרירי/*Ketev Meriri*). The **demons** of catastrophe is identified from biblical passages (Deut. 32:24; Ps. 91:6; Isa. 28:2). He is featured in a discussion of having a fortunate nature:

> Abaye was walking. Rav Papa was on his right and Rav Huna was on his left. He saw Ketev Meriri approaching him on his left—he had Rav Papa and Rav Huna switch sides. Rav Papa said, "Why aren't you concerned for me?" [Huna replied] "Your Mazel is good now." (Pes. 111a–b)

His power is greatest between the seventeenth of Tammuz, the date when the walls of **Jerusalem** were breached by the Romans, and the ninth of Av, the day the **Temple** was destroyed. He is scaly and hairy and rolls about like a ball. His gaze brings instant **Death** (Num. R. 12.3, 7:9; *Me'am Loez*).

Bittul ha-Torah: (בטול התורה). "Nullification of (precepts) of the **Torah**." In general, this is regarded as a bad thing, and Jews are forbidden to engage in any activity that is so distracting from engagement with Torah it effectively crowds it out of one's life (A.Z. 18b; Tos. Shab. 7.5; Tos. *A.Z.* 2.2). In certain Haredi and Hasidic circles, this can be applied quite restrictively, effectively prohibiting any "secular" pursuit at all.

Bittul ha-Yesh/Bittul ha-Nefesh: (בטול היש)."Nullification of the Ego/Selfhood." This can mean a range of self-negating conditions from total submission to God's will to ego-annihilation. Since the ego stands as an impediment between the **Soul** and God, Chasidic teachings encourage the spiritual seeker to sublimate or even overthrow the self in order to achieve **devekut**, unification with the true reality that is God.[1]

1. Rabinowicz, *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, 48; A. Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 2 (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 181–91.

Black: *SEE* COLOR.

Blasphemy: (ברכת השם/*Birkat ha-Shem* [euphemism]). While the **Torah** prohibits insulting God (Lev. 24:10–23), the exact parameters of this offense are unclear. In Jewish tradition the offense of blasphemy is limited to one who pronounces the **Tetragrammaton** (YHVH) for the purpose of profaning it (M. Sanh. 7.5; Sanh. 56a). In the **Bible**, the punishment could include **Death**, but that has been nullified since Talmudic times. The Mishnah statement on the matter, "Let YHVH curse YHVH," makes the issue so puzzling, it becomes legally impossible to define or enforce. The Gospel accounts that claim **Jesus** was

condemned by a Jewish court for “blasphemy” for calling himself **son of God** has no basis in any known Jewish **law** (M. Sanh. 7:5), suggesting the charge may be the Gospel writer’s own invention.

Blessed Holy One: (הקודש ברוך הוא/*ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu*). A title for God popularized in Talmudic times, in Kabbalistic thought “The Blessed Holy One” designates the specifically male aspect of the **Pleroma** and it is identified with the sefirah of **Tiferet**. *SEE* NAMES OF GOD; SEFIROT.

Blessing: (ברכה/*B’rachah*). The capacity to bless something belongs foremost to God (Gen. 1, 12). A human may also bless, but with the understanding, either explicitly stated (“May it be Your will …”) or implied, that the power of blessing comes from the Deity. Because a blessing is the exercise of divine power, even if humans utter it, Jewish literature regards blessings to have real consequences (Gen. 28, saga of Esau and Jacob**)**. Though **Isaac** intended the blessing he spoke over **Jacob** for **Esau**, once it was given, it could not be rescinded. In this sense a blessing is also more like an adjuration or decree of destiny than a **Prayer**. The fact that humans have the capacity to bless is a sign of our exalted status in the cosmos (Meg. 15a; Ber. 7a; Chag. 5b).

As is the case with so many other aspects of Jewish practice, the Zohar eroticizes blessing, claiming its existence only flow through the union of male and female forces (III:74b). The theme of drawing down blessing through the sefirot via the sexual act becomes a recurrent theme is later Kabbalistic teachings.[1] *SEE* CURSE.

1. M. Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 122, 183, 205–206.

Blood: (דם/*Dam*). Blood is considered the essence of life, full of numinous qualities, and the handling of blood is of tremendous concern to God:

> And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, that eats any blood, I will set My face against that person that eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the meat is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your lives; for it is the blood in the living thing makes atonement [for consuming them]. Therefore I said unto the Children of Israel: No person of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourns among you eat blood. (Lev. 17:11–12)

For that reason, many taboos and laws concerning blood are found in Jewish law (Lev. 19:26; M. Ker. 5:1; *Yad, Ma’achalot* Asurot 6:2). The sprinkling of blood

from the **sacrifices** upon the **altar** was an element in the rituals of atonement and **purification**, and blood resulting from slaughter for **food** had to be poured out on the ground and covered over (Lev. 17:13). The **Torah** expressly forbids the use of blood for **divination** (Lev. 19:26).

It is the first of the **plagues** God unleashes upon **Egypt**—every body of **water** , from the sacred Nile to the cooking kettles, was turned to blood and defiled. Blood also has protective power against numinous forces, as demonstrated during the **Exodus** from Egypt (Ex. 12:7, 12:22–23). Medieval physiology held that menstrual blood (*niddah*) was transferred/transformed into mother's milk during and following gestation.

The Jewish awe regarding blood continued to have a paranormal aspect—the Zohar develops a dichotomous metaphysic around the symbolism of blood of **circumcision** (symbolizing **purity**) and blood of **menstruation** (symbolizing impurity). It also offers a contrast between the "blood of Jacob" and the "blood of Esau," a polemical mirror image of the emerging Spanish obsession with *limpieza de sangre,* blood purity of lineage.[1] Jewish men were particularly in awe of the weird and frightening power of menstrual blood, a fascination with a strongly misogynistic tone. One medieval tradition held that menstruating **women** who gaze into **mirrors** will leave blood marks on the glass.

As alluded to above, blood from sacrifices and food slaughtering must be poured out on the ground and covered, a means of legitimizing the taking and consumption of animal life through a rite of acknowledgment, "returning" the "life" to its maker and legitimate owner. Subsequent Jewish law requires that Jews go to great lengths to extract blood from animal carcasses, first hanging the animals for draining, then soaking and salting the flesh afterward to draw out any additional blood. This taboo about **eating** blood has meant that blood is not a regular *materia magica* used in Jewish magical formulae, rituals, or potions. Occasional exceptions appear in magical manuals such as Sefer ha-Razim, where we learn lion's blood, mixed with wine and rubbed on the soles of the feet, gives one persuasive power over princes. Later religious authorities, usually drawing from non-Jewish sources, start to permit blood as an ingredient in therapeutic formulae (*Shevut Yaakov* II: 70).

Ironically, the Jewish attitude of aversion to blood may have inspired Christian anti-Semites to regard Jews as blood obsessed and even blood lusting. Among American folklorists, the custom of hanging slaughtered animals and draining the blood practiced among Hispanics of the Southwest is taken as evidence of **Crypto-Jewish** occult folkways.[2] *SEE* BLOOD LIBEL.

1. D. Biale, *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 106–107.

2. J. Neulander, “The New Mexican Crypto-Jewish Canon: Choosing to be ‘Chosen’ in Millennial Tradition,” *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* 18, no. 12 (1996): 140–58.

Blood Libel: The claim that Jews kill gentiles motivated by ritual/demonic impulses. While accusations of Jews engaging in ritual murder go as far back as the 1st century CE (Against Apion 2, viii 95), in what amounts to a remarkable disregard of all the evidence that Jews loathed the consumption of **blood**, medieval Christian superstition held that Jews, vampire-like, craved the blood of innocent Christians. This accusation, now known as a “blood libel,” enjoyed great currency in Christian circles from the Middle Ages until well into the 20th century, though it was sporadically debunked by Church authorities.[1]

Early versions of the libel claimed Jews would steal the consecrated host from church sacristies and then perform satanic rituals upon the **bread** in order to make it bleed. Because Easter was the time of **Jesus's** death, the rumor then arose that Jews ritually reenacted the death of Christ by killing an “innocent,” usually a child, and using the child’s blood for the making of **matzah** for **Passover**. The first such accusation occurred in Norwich, England, in the 12th century. A long series of similar accusations arose across Europe in the centuries that followed. The purported Christian victims were frequently beatified, while the Jews accused mostly met manifold gruesome ends, the manners of death being limited only by the local imagination.



Woodcut of the mass execution of Jews in Nuremberg, 1493

During the Black Death **plagues** of the 14th century, it was widely believed that Jews were spreading the contagion by poisoning the **wells** used by Christians, leading to numerous savage persecutions across Europe. Actual trials of Jews for ritual murder peaked during the 18th century.

A Russian clerk, Menachem Mendel Beilis, was the last Jew tried for the crime of ritual murder in 1911 (he was acquitted). In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Catholic newspapers revived the charge against Jews as part of a campaign to

combat the liberal, socialist, and democratic ideas then sweeping Europe (Jews were seen as central players in these infernal ideologies). Partly as a result, accusations continued to arise in Catholic countries in the first half of the 20th century.[2] Gleefully promoted by the Nazis in the 1930s–40s,the blood libel is enjoying a new life in the Arab world, where the media and leaders in Syria and Saudi Arabia periodically claim that demonic Jews are filled with (literal) blood lust directed at non-Jews.[3]

1. J. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (Philadelphia, PA: JPS, 1943), 140–58.

2. D. Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001).

3. "Top Hamas Official Osama Hamdan: Jews Use Blood for Passover Matzos," MEMRITV, Clip No. 4384 (transcript), July 28, 2014, http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/4384.htm.

Blue: *SEE* COLOR.

Body: (גוף/*Guf*). The body is both a precious vessel for the **Soul** and a mirror of higher realities (Lev. R. 34:3). Generally speaking, Judaism does not view the body as inferior to the soul, as did the Greeks, Gnostics, and some sects of **Christianity**.[1] Nor do Jewish sources perceive sexuality as a "product" of the fall from **Eden** (RaSHI, comment on Gen. 3:1). Rather, all material things are, as God describes them in the first chapter of Genesis, intrinsically "very good." Two millennia later, the anonymous 14th-century mystic who composed the Igeret ha-Kodesh, "The Holy Missive," archly defends the intrinsic holiness of the body against the kind of popular perception that was current then among people under the sway of Greek-derived rational philosophy:

> The matter is not as Rabbi Moses of blessed memory thought and believed in his Guide to the Perplexed, when he praised Aristotle's statements … Heaven forbid! Matters are not as the Greek work states, since this work contains subtle traces of heresy. If that Greek had believed that the world is renewed by intent, he would not have said that. But we, who possess the holy Torah believe that the blessed God created everything as His wisdom decreed and created nothing shameful or ugly. For if we say that copulation is shameful, then the sexual organs are contemptible. But God, blessed be He, created them according to His word: "And you established them …" [2]

Isaac of Akko likewise taught that the body is *the* necessary vehicle for human spirituality. But for the same reason, the management of the body is a major Jewish concern.

For this reason, the preeminent concept concerning the afterlife is that of **resurrection**, of having the body (perhaps in a more perfected form) reunited with the soul. Thus the body comes close enough to God's ideal that we can expect to be reunited with it in the **World to Come**.

From Early Judaism onward, the Rabbis perceive all humans, regardless of differentiating features, as equally in the **divine image**, and actually encourage interracial procreation (Bek. 45b). The body is regarded as a **microcosm**, a replica of the universe in miniature (AdRN 31:3). According to many Sages, to study the human body is to gain insight into the nature of God. The body in certain ways concretizes **Torah**: The 248 positive **commandments** contained within it correspond to the 248 "limbs" of the human body (Mak. 23b; *Targum Jonathan* Gen. 1:27). Kabbalists find the **sefirot** manifest in the organization of the body, associating its limbs and members with each of the ten aspects of God's **emanations** (*Pardes Rimmonim, Sha'ar Hatzinorot*). Illustrations superimposing the sefirotic **Tree of Life** on a human form are commonplace. Others, like Abraham ibn Ezra, see the human form as analogous to the **Temple** and its furnishings. **Kabbalah** articulates the principle that "limb strengthens limb"; human bodily performance of commandments strengthens the "limbs" (i.e., attributes) of God.[3] All such comparisons only serve to highlight the sacred nature of the body, its status as a precious vessel of divine purpose, and as a potential receptacle of divine power. *SEE* ADAM KADMON; BONE; FINGER; TZORECHA GEVORAH.

1. A. Altmann, "Homo Imago Dei in Jewish and Christian Theology," *Journal of Religion* 48 (1968): 235–259.

2. S. J. Cohen, *The Holy Letter: A Study in Jewish Sexual Morality* (New York: KTAV, 1976), 323.

3. Idel, *Kabbalah*, 184–185.

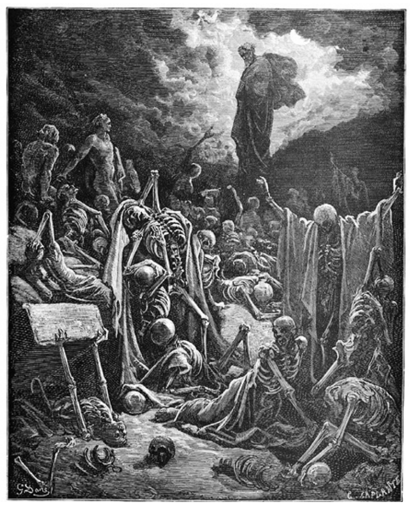
Boel: (בואל). An **Angel** mentioned in Sefer ha-Razim, he is the principle angel who governs the "seventh camp of the first **firmament**." He is probably a Judaized version of the Greco-Egyptian god Bouel.

Bone: (אצם/*Etzem*). Rabbinic tradition identifies 248 bones in the human body, equaling the number of positive **commandments** found in the **Torah**. This number may be purely symbolic, or may be the result of actual empiricism. Counting teeth along with the 200+ bones classified by modern physiologists helps shrink the gap between what the Rabbis claim and what is known today.

In the **Bible**, God uses bone as the starting point in creating (or recreating) a living person (Gen. 2; Ezek. 37).

These last remains of the dead are regarded as having an enduring connection to the spirit. **Joseph** asks that his bones be brought up from **Egypt** to Israel, apparently not out of mere sentimentality, but in order than he might eventually dwell with the society of his dead **ancestors** (Gen. 50:25). This also may be the reason for the particular distress and pathos regarding the death of **Rachel**, whose bones must be left in a roadside grave, far from the ancestral tomb at Machpelah (Jer. 31:15–16).

Skulls were used to commune with the dead in Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian **necromancy**, but even the few incidents of necromancy reported in the Bible do not make mention of this practice. In the **Midrash**, however, the **terafim** mentioned in Genesis 30 are explicitly linked to this practice, claiming the terafim stolen from **Laban** were actually shrunken heads that spoke auguries (PdRE 36).



Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones *by Gustave Doré*

The Midrash speaks of a bone called the **Luz** that, like the soul, is indestructible. It is from this bone that God will resurrect the body (Lev. R. 18:1). It was believed that postmortem diagnosis of a person's habits could be made by examining their bones (Gen. R. 89:2). One tradition goes further, claiming on the basis of Psalm 38:4 and Ezekiel 32:27 that the sins of mortals are inscribed on their bones (*Masekhet Kallah Rabbati* 3:1).

A late Kabbalistic tradition holds that after **Death** the bones that bear the marks of iniquity (see above) are transformed into **demons** (*Kitzur Shelah*). This is a variation on the idea that would emerge in Chasidism that **Angels** and demons are the byproduct of human moral actions.

In the priestly system of **purity**, human and animal bones are ritually impure. This severely curtails the use of bones in Jewish magic. An exceptional example found in the **Talmud** involves an incantation **ritual** for freeing a bone lodged in the throat by placing a similar (nonhuman) bone on the top of the head (Shab. 67a). Archaeologists have found finger bones buried beneath the thresholds of the Dura-Europos **synagogue** (ca. 3rd century) in Syria, evidently a prophylactic custom also attested to in neighboring pagan shrines. A magical text from the Cairo Geniza (T-S K 1.15) prescribes burying a **dog** or donkey shoulder bone under the houses of two people you want to alienate from each other. The bones of kosher animals could be incorporated into medical treatments (*Shevut Yaakov* III:responsum 77).

The fingernails, while not technically bones, play an important role in the Kabbalistic imagination, because they represent the kelipot, the "husks" of impurity that attach themselves to, and obscure, the divine **nitzotz**/spark (Zohar Shemot).Therefore it is customary in Kabbalistic/Chasidic circles for people to clip their nails on the eve of Shabbat as an act of **purification**. *SEE* BODY; BURIAL; FINGER.

Book of Formation: *SEE* YETZIRAH, SEFER.

Book of Illumination: *SEE* BAHIR, SEFER HA-.

Book of Jashar: *SEE* YASHAR, SEFER.

Book of Life: (ספר החיים/*Sefer ha-Chayyim*). The heavenly book in which the names of individuals are recorded for life in the coming year. Not being recorded in the book signifies that the person will die in the next twelve months. The names are written in the Book starting on each Rosh Hashanah, and the Book is then sealed on **Yom Kippur**>. The concept appears in the **Bible** in various guises; it may be related to the concept of the *Tup Shimati* the Mesopotamian "Tablet of Destinies" battled over by the gods (Ezek. 2:8; Zech. 5:1; Jer. 17:1; Mal. 3:16; *Enuma Elish*).

Exclusion from the Book means a death sentence in the coming year. The Book of Life is a major theme in the High Holy Day liturgy, a way of reminding the wayward to repent (High Holy Day Machzor; R.H. 16a; Ex. R. 45:6; PR 8).

Book of Radiance: *SEE* ZOHAR, SEFER.

Book of Raziel: *SEE* RAZIEL, SEFER.

Book of Secrets: *SEE* RAZIM, SEFER HA-.

Book of the Pious: *SEE* CHASIDIM, SEFER.

Book of the Wars of the Lord: *SEE* MILCHAMOT ADONAI, SEFER.

Book of the Watchers: *SEE* ENOCH, FIRST BOOK OF.

Bor: (בור). "Pit." The Underworld. Going there is not a good thing (Ezek. 26:20). A biblical synonym for Sheol, in later Jewish literature it becomes the name for one of the seven levels of **Gehenna**. *SEE* BOR SHE'ON.

Bor She'on or Bor Sha'on: (בור שאון). "Pit of Turmoil." A term derived from Psalm 40:3. It is one of the seven compartments of **Gehenna** mentioned in the **Talmud** (Sot. 10a; Eruv. 19a).

Botarel, Moses: Sorcerer and failed **Messiah** (Spanish, ca. 15th century). Botarel was a magician who used **amulets**, sacred names, and angelic summonings. He wrote an eccentric commentary for Sefer Yetzirah. After a visitation from **Elijah**, he declared himself messiah, but the claim came to nothing.

Bow: (קשת/*Keshet*). Biblical rhetoric often envisions God as a cosmic warrior with a bow (Zech. 9, 10). The **rainbow**, of course, is a **sign** of God's peaceful intent toward the world after **the Flood**, God having "hung up" the bow (Gen. 9). Jewish children in traditional circles often include bow-and-arrow play on the holiday of Lag B'omer in commemoration of this promise, as well as the special association of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai with rainbows (Zohar I:72b). Starting in Talmudic times, the bow takes on a sexual association, becoming a euphemism for a penis (Gen. R. 87:7; Chag. 15a; Sanh. 92a; Zohar I:58a, 247a).

Bratzlav Chasidim: The so-called "Dead Chasidim" first formed around the charismatic and enigmatic Nachman of Bratzlav in the first decade of the 19th century. Unable to move past his death, they have been unique among Chasids for having no living **rebbe** to lead them. Their particular practices and outlook have provoked suspicion and hostility from other Jewish groups. They have even been suspected of being secret **Frankist** heretics.

Today they are among the most open, if undisciplined, of the Chasidic sects, attracting many seekers from the larger Jewish world.

Bread: (לחם/*Lechem*). "Rabbi Isaac teaches that in the **Torah**, the **Prophets**, and the Writings, we find bread is food for the heart" (Gen. R. 48.2). Bread is the archetypal sustenance in Judaism. The use of bread for **ritual** purposes extends back to the beginnings of the people **Israel**.

In the biblical age, bread was one of the acceptable forms of offerings in the sacrificial cult. The afternoon offering was even coined *minchah*, meaning "meal offering." Theurgic practices included the display of *lechem ha-panim*, Bread of the Presence or "shew bread," twelve loaves that were set in the sanctuary of the **Temple** and replaced on a weekly basis. Unleavened bread, or **matzah**, also plays a central role in the rites and observance of **Passover**. **Manna** was the miraculous bread that fell from **Heaven**, feeding the Israelites for their forty-year sojourn in the **wilderness**.

Chief among the purely ritual uses of bread is *challah*. A small amount of it is pulled from the dough and burnt, in commemoration of the portion set aside for the **priest**. An additional ritual use is the ceremony of *tashlich*. Some say this custom is based on the notion that sins could be "transferred" to a substance which led to the custom of casting bread upon a natural **water** source.[1] In authoritative interpretations this act is purely symbolic, but some apparently believed there was a metaphysical efficacy to this custom and that they were literally casting away their sins through the agency of the bread. Medieval customs included setting a loaf of bread beside a dying man, perhaps as sustenance for the **Soul**'s journey after **Death**.

Overtly magical traditions include the belief that bread and **salt** given to a newlywed couple or the family moving into a new house will deter the **evil eye**. Based on an interpretation of Exodus 23:25, it was believed that bread and water hung in a home would prevent the spread of disease (*Ta'amei ha-Minhagim* III:142). A wounded **vampire** could fend off destruction if she (Jewish tradition only mentions female vampires) could obtain and consume the bread and salt of her assailant (*Sefer Hasidim* 1466, *Testament of Judah the Pious*). Cakes decorated with magical **incantations** would be consumed by people to "absorb" the magical result (*Machzor Vitry; Sefer Rokeach*). This practice is most associated with magical methods for improving **memory** and the mastery of Torah texts (*Sefer ha-Rokeach, Sefer Raziel*).

The Hasidim develop many rituals around bread, especially bread that has been imbued with a measure of holiness because it was blessed or handled by a tzadik, a righteous person. *SEE* AFIKOMAN; MANNA; SUBSTITUTION; TISH; UNLEAVENED BREAD.

1. E. Frankel and B. Platkin Teutsch, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols* (Philadelphia, PA: JPS, 2000), 24–25.

Bread of the Presence: (לחם הפנים/*lechem ha-panim*). "Bread of Display," "Bread of the Presence," or in that quaint King James idiom, "Shew Bread" (Lev. 24:5–9). These twelves loaves were displayed as a symbolic offering for a week in the Mishkan, and later, the **Temple** sanctuary on a **gold** table and then given to the **priests** to eat—yum (Git. 60a).

With the end of the Temple service, as part of transforming the Jewish home a *mikdash me'at,* a small **altar**, Jews would have **bread** for Shabbat and festivals on their tables, usually two loaves of challah (bread with a token dedicatory offering removed from the dough before cooking), signifying something different, the *lechem mishnah* (the two portions of **manna**) received by the Israelites for **Sabbath** (Ex. 16:22).

Lurianic **Kabbalah** revived the twelve loaves, a custom preserved today in **Chasidism** (*Mishmeret Shalom* 28e). The practice is drawn not directly from the **Bible**, lest one be accused of engaging in nullified Temple ritual, but from the teachings of **Isaac Luria**, who insisted twelve should be obligatory. He noted that in the Zoharic phrase, "This is the table that is before God," the word *zeh* ("this") equals twelve in **gematria** —rendering it "12 is the table that is before God" (Pinchas 245). Twelve loaves ensured that God would be present at that gathering. These needed to be arrayed six on one side of the table, six on the other, just as the *lechem panim* were.

The Hasidic work *Sha'arei Teshuvah* proposes a different arrangement: four stacked double-decker on the right, left, and center (*Sha'arei Teshuvah* 274a). Some Hasidim don't actually serve twelve loaves, but will bake large challot made of twelve parts (either braids or just twelve different dough samples) known as *yudbeisnik.*

Breaking of the Vessels: (שבירת הכלים/*Shevirat ha-Kelim*). The primordial dissolution of the cosmos. According to the cosmogonic theory of **Isaac Luria**, God is the totality of all things, and it is the nature of God's abundant goodness to want to give. This divine desire to give immediately created a receptacle (the primordial universe) to receive that abundant goodness, in the form of **light**, flowing out from God. God created intermediate vessels to contain the supernal light emanating from Adam Kadmon. However, these vessels initially could only receive the divine overflow but not return it or discharge it, so they filled to capacity and shattered. The universe therefore suffered a cosmic disruption, or

misalignment (*Etz ha-Chayyim*, Sha'arei ha-Melachim 5; *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* 3; *Tanya* 25).

In order to bring it back into balance, God reformed the structure of the universe into vessels that could both give and receive. Often this new structure is called the Partzufim. Therefore the universe now contains unevenly distributed areas of abundance and areas of lack, with **nitzotzot**, scattered divine sparks, which need to be gathered and given back so the original order can be restored. Those sparks of the divine light that fell deepest into **Creation**, however, were encased in **kelipot** (husks) of impurity, evil, and entropy. This then is the Lurianic rationale for the Torah and **commandments**: it is by the correct performance of these acts that we unleash the divine sparks trapped in every aspect of worldly existence and, in partnership with God, restore the divine order (*Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*). Various Chasidic writers, such as Nachman of Bratzlav and Sh'neur Zelman of Laydi, have offered refinements and elaborations of this metaphysical model. This **myth** is perhaps the most overt expression of **Gnosticism** found in Jewish **mysticism**. *SEE* TIKKUN.

Breastplate: (חושן/*Choshen*). The breastplate of the High Priest of the cult of YHVH. It had both symbolic and spiritual significance. It consisted of either a **gold** plate or gold threads interwoven with scarlet, purple, and blue fabrics and mounted with twelve precious and semiprecious stones, each one engraved with the name of a tribe, arranged in four rows across. There may also have been a pouch behind it, made from folded fabric. According to one rabbinic tradition, the engraving on the stones was done by the **Shamir worm** (Git. 68a–b).

One of the functions of the *Hoshen* was divining YHVH's will, and as such it was sometimes referred to as the *Hoshen mishpat*, the "Breastplate of **judgment**." If and how it was used, and its exact relationship to the Urim and Thummim, is unclear. Perhaps they were used in conjunction with each other. Or perhaps the title "Breastplate of Judgment" simply derives from the fact that the *Hoshen* held the Urim and Thummim when not in use. Others believe that the High Priest gazed into the gemstones and received oracles from the patterns of light refraction (lithomancy). Another tradition holds that it functioned like a Ouija board, with the priest scrying the letters in order to form word messages (Yoma 73b). *SEE* EPHOD; GEMSTONES; PRIESTHOOD AND PRIEST.

Breasts: (שׁדיים). Human breasts become a mystical symbol by virtue of **Song of Songs** 4:5, "your breasts are like two fawns," and chapter 8, "We have a little sister whose breasts are not yet formed" (8:8) and "I am a fortress, my breasts

are like towers" (8:10). *Targum Song of Songs* declare **Moses** and **Aaron** the two breasts. The **Zohar** finds divine powers allegorized in these verses (1:44b, 2:253a, 2:257a). The **Hebrew** word for breasts, *shadiyim*, is also recognized to be part of the biblical name for God, El Shaddai. Sefirah Binah "nurses" the lower worlds. In other texts, the Shekhinah suckles the righteous, and in turn the righteous deeds of the Jewish people are called the "breasts of the Shekhinah," because they nourish the cosmos (Zohar II:80b).

Bride of God: (כלה or זוג). While the **Bible** gives no indication that the God of Israel has a divine consort, a piece of biblical-era graffiti reveals that there were people who held that YHVH was linked to **Asherah**. In the prophetic imagination, the people **Israel** are the bride of God (Jer. 2:2; Hos. 21:22).

Rabbinic and mystical literature amplifies this teaching until it becomes a major metaphor for the relationship between God and the Jews (Pes. 106b; Sanh. 7a; PdRE 41; MdRI 3; Deut. R. 3:12; PR 31:10; Bahir, 196; *Sha'ar ha-Pesukim*). The **Zohar** also speaks of the **Shekhinah** as the "bride of God," though this may be a distinction without a difference, since the Shekhinah is regarded to be both the feminine side of the **Pleroma** and the collective **Soul** of Israel (Zohar I:120, 202a–203a; Zohar II:175b; Zohar III:74b). Mostly startling of all is the Zohar's claim that during this time of **exile** and evil ascendant, **Lilith** has become God's consort (II:118a–b; III:97a). *SEE* MARRIAGE; PHALLUS; SEX; ZIVVUGA KADDISHA.

Brit Milah: *SEE* CIRCUMCISION.

Brontology: A method of divining the future from meteorological and astrological observations. A genre of writing very popular in late antiquity, there is one Jewish example, an Aramaic fragment (4Q318), which has been found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls** (4Q138).

Broshah: (ברושה). A child-stealing demoness.[1]

1. R. Eisenberg, *The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 6.

Burial: (קבורה/*kevurah*). The period immediately following death is regarded in many cultures as a liminal time in which the soul must be assisted by the living to find its way into the afterlife. The consequences of failing to properly do this include displacement of the soul as a **ghost** or other distressed spirit or the bringing of **evil** upon those living who did not fulfill their obligations to the dead.

Hints of this thinking are evident in the **Bible**, yet despite a few allusions to *rafaim* (ghosts), the texts tell us only the most minimal facts about how the Hebrews buried their dead. Specifically, we find the use of **Caves** for family/clan burial, or barring that, the construction of a cairn with an upright stone **pillar**. The desire of **Joseph** to have his **bones** transferred to **Israel** may reflect a belief that his spirit would be in a kind of afterlife exile unless he was buried alongside his kin (Gen. 50:25).

For several centuries Jews practiced secondary burial, which involved first allowing the soft tissue to decay away and then reinterring the bones in an ossuary or bone chamber with the bones of other family members (this is the process being performed in the **Jesus** burial narrative). While there is one mention of cremation in the Scriptures (1 Sam. 31:12), the burning of bodies is never accepted as normative and is forbidden in Jewish **law**.

In the more expansive rabbinic literature, however, many more beliefs and practices surrounding burial, including beliefs about the soul and its needs, are recorded. A **Body** without a soul is vulnerable to **possession** by an impure spirit, therefore the body needs to be interred before sunset (Deut. 21:23; Zohar III:88b). Bodies were buried with their feet directed toward **Jerusalem**, so that in the moment of **resurrection** they would arise facing the way home. Tradition mandates a body be buried quickly, for to leave it to decay is a sign of disrespect. On the other hand, the bodies of the **Righteous** do not decay (B.M. 84b; Zohar I:4a). According to Sefer Chasidim, those who die bearing a grudge will seek vengeance against the living after they are gone, so it is best to settle any disputes with a dying person (708).

Many customs relating to fear of the **evil eye** are written down during the Middle Ages. The formal existence of *Chevraot Kadisha*, communal burial societies, helped preserve many of these. Examples include not allowing a child to follow the coffin or even attend the funeral (there was already a prohibition that applied to the sons of **priests** based on the rules of priestly **purity**). Mourners in some communities shattered a pot in front of their door when they left for a funeral, evidently to frighten away the evil eye. Sephardic Jews were known to throw **coins** around the coffin of the dead in order to “pay off” evil spirits who might otherwise attack the vulnerable spirit of the deceased. A grave should not be left dug and empty overnight, lest the evil eye see it and cause another death. All the **water** in the house would be poured out, either because the dead soul may have used it to perform ablutions in preparation for its journey to the afterlife, or because the **Angel of Death** might have used the water to wipe

clean the knife used to slay the deceased. Water would be poured over the threshold of a house in mourning to prevent the spirit of the newly deceased from entering his former abode. Those who accompany the body need to perform various rites, such as the Tikkun Shovavim, to protect against evil spirits drawn to the death. These might include ritual ablutions and interrupting the processional to and from the grave (SA Yoreh Deah 339–75; *Ma'avar Yabbok*).

Preparations of the body for burial have become increasingly elaborate, and entail complex symbolic and mimetic rituals to ensure the soul safely reaches God, or its next stage of **reincarnation**. Biblical verses are recited over the body, equating the deceased to a priest, the **Ten Commandments**, and other heirophanous entities beloved of God. The body is subjected to **purification** in water, a gesture meant to represent the purification of the soul.[1] In some communities, shards of pottery are placed over the eyes of the dead. The thumb of the corpse is often bent to form the **hand** in the shape of the letter *shin* and bound in place with *tzitzit*. Some burial societies place a stick or a fork in the hand of the dead so that it may symbolically dig its way to the Holy Land for the resurrection.

The dread of burying a person alive does not seem to have preoccupied Jews. Thus when, as a response to this anxiety, European gentile authorities started requiring bodies be kept above ground for three days, many Jewish communities resisted. This was a controversy of metaphysical significance to those who believed a delay in burial meant the soul could not successfully transmigrate to its next incarnation.

The **Baal Shem Tov** was credited with being a kind of spirit guide to the disoriented souls of the newly dead, guiding them to their reward on the eve of the **Sabbath**. Pious Jews to this day will congregate into *Chevra Tehillim*, "Psalm fellowships," reciting **psalms** post mortem in order to ease the transition for the dead. Many of the customs mentioned above, or variations of them, continue to be observed in various traditional communities. *SEE* BANIM SHOVAVIM; DEATH; GHOST; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY; SOUL; WORLD TO COME.

1. G. Dennis, "Purity and Transformation: The Mimetic Performance of Scriptural Texts in the Jewish Ritual of Preparing the Dead for Burial," *Journal of Ritual Studies*, 26:1 (2012): 51–64.

Burning Bush: (סנה/*Senah*). The fiery bush from which God's **Angel** made himself manifest to **Moses**, and from which God gave Moses his commission to deliver the people of **Israel** (Ex. 3–4). It symbolizes both God's concern for Israel and God's presence in even the lowliest part of **Creation**. Exodus Rabbah

2:5 includes a debate whether the angel of the bush was **Michael** or **Gabriel**.

Despite the fantastic nature of this apparition, the burning bush has not received a great deal of esoteric interpretation. Whether the bush should be regarded as belonging to the motif of the “cosmic tree” found in both Pagan and Jewish cosmology is a matter of debate. St. Catherine’s Monastery in the Sinai claims to have the original bush preserved in its courtyard as a holy relic.



Moses at the Burning Bush *by E. M. Lilien*

In a classic example of the magical application of **paradox**, the word *senah* can be recited over and over to combat **fever** (Shab. 67a). In more elaborate versions, a bush is actually cut down as part of a fever-combating **ritual**. *SEE* FIRE; TREE.

Burnt Offerings: (עולה). *SEE* BLOOD; SACRIFICE.

[contents]

C



Cabala Mystica: "The Mysterious Tradition," or sometimes referred to as "The Book of Sacred Magic." An alchemical text composed by Abraham ben Simeon. Variant manuscripts survive in **Hebrew**, French, and German. It shows a broad knowledge of Jewish sources, but given its multiple references to Christian ideas, it is unclear whether the author is a Jew or a Christian. *SEE* ALCHEMY.

Cain: The first child of **Adam** and **Eve**. According to the **Bible**, Cain was exiled from his family after he murdered his brother, **Abel** (Gen. 4). God marked him so that all creatures would know not to kill him. According to one rabbinic legend, God marked Cain by giving him a **horn** growing out of his forehead. In old age, his vision-impaired grandson, Lemach, killed Cain when he mistook him for a game animal. According to another tradition, the letter *vav* (one of the

letters of the **Tetragrammaton**) was inscribed on his forehead, granting him theurgic protection (Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1:111). Post-homicide, Cain wandered not only the **Earth**, but the **seven worlds**, spawning monstrous offspring.

Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer 21 calls him a "spawn of **Satan**," reflecting a tradition that Cain was actually the offspring of the coupling of **Eve** and the **serpent**, rather than with Adam:

> The "Beasts of the Field" are the offspring of the original Serpent who had sexual intercourse with Eve … From them came forth Cain who killed Abel … (Zohar 1:28b. Also see *Targum* Pseudo-Jonathan, Gen. 4:1; Shab. 146a; PdRE 13; Zohar I:34b, 54b–55a)

It was widely taught that all of his descendants, up to the time of **Noah** were, in some way, perverse. This tradition is also used to reframe Genesis 6:4, replacing the "**fallen angel**" interpretation:

> Rabbi Hiyya Said: "sons of divinity" (Gen. 6:2–4) were the sons of Cain. For when Samael mounted Eve (Shab. 146a), he injected [semen of] filth into her, and she conceived and bore Cain. And his aspect was unlike that of the other humans and all those who came from his side [of the human family tree] were called "sons of divinity." (Zohar I:37a, 54a)

Thus, the children of Cain are the "sons of divinity" because Cain was sired by an **Angel**. Another tradition that embraces the fallen angel thread claims it was Cain's daughters whose allure ensnared the "sons of divinity" in the first place (Gen. 6), but his line ended with the bulk of humanity during **the Flood**, a tragedy which his progeny helped trigger (*Wisdom of Solomon* 10:3–4; *Chochmat ha-Nefesh* 26b).

In **Kabbalah**, Cain is most often held to be the personification of the fallen state of mankind, the symbolic representation of spiritual alienation between man and God, while Tubal-Cain, **Enoch**, Noah, and **Abraham** each signify a progressive restoration of the divine-human relationship. In continuity with earlier traditions of his demonic associations, he wandered the seven lower worlds, fathering monstrous and demonic **children** (Zohar 1:178b). The taint of Cain, passed down from his serpent-demon sire, persisted with humanity until the giving of the **Torah**. In the writings of **Chayyim Vital** , by contrast, as the first-born human, Cain possessed the spiritual authority of both "kingship," (and therefore messianic potential) and "**priesthood**." These qualities require that Cain's **Soul** undergo multiple rectification to restore the original potential to the

world, and maps the rectifying incarnations of Cain through **Esau**, **Jethro**, **Nadav**, **Phineas**, **Samson**, **Samuel**, **Elijah**, Johannan ben Zakkai, Akiba, and Joseph Caro, among many others. (*Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* 34–35). Vital also believed he himself was the most recent **reincarnation** of Cain's soul.

Cairo Geniza: A *geniza* is a repository for damaged or discarded texts that contain divine names, where they await eventual **burial**, like a human corpse. In the ancient **synagogue** of Fostat, Egypt, outside of Cairo, the Geniza there had not been emptied for some 1,200 years when Western scholars discovered its existence at the end of the 19th century. This collection of texts dates from as early as the 8th century CE. Along with biblical, rabbinic, and liturgical texts, the Geniza includes a number of astrological and magical documents such as the Testament of Solomon, Sefer ha-Razim, the Book of the responding entity, and the Book of Guidance, books which include **incantations** to invoke **Angels** and to control and expel **demons**. **amulets**, herbal preventatives, spells for combating illness, and mantic techniques, such as **lecanomancy**, are also found among the documents. A partial list of magical texts in the Geniza includes:

T-S K Oxford Ms. Heb. C 18/30: A fragment of *Sefer ha-Razim*. There are multiple fragments of *Sefer ha-Razim* found in the Geniza.

T-S K 1.15: A Hebrew-Arabic fragment of a magical handbook. It contains formulae for **birth**, **love**, and **hate** magic, and **curses**.

T-S K 1.19: A fragment of magical spells for **fertility**, for birth, "for opening everything closed …" for use against forgetfulness, and for protection against **poison**.

T-S K 1.57: A fragment of spells for winning the favor of powerful people and for protection against harm on a journey.

T-S K 1.58: A text of spells for silencing enemies and for protecting against scorpions and against **witchcraft**.

T-S K 1.80: A fragmentary text of adjuring spells for angels to subdue enemies, for augury, and for protection.

T-S K 1.91: A text of spells for **healing**, **sleep**, household tranquility, counteracting curses, silencing enemies, and preventing stillbirth and miscarriage.

T-S K 1.132: A fragment of incantations for **divination**, love, creating enmity, learning, and gaining influence.

T-S K 1.171: Spell text with formulae for learning **Torah**, protection from scorpions, creating divine fire, and influencing others.

There are many more magical texts among the Geniza collection, most little more than scraps of material, which have some magical, mystical, or occult purpose.

Calendar: (לוח/*Luach*). Since biblical times, the Hebrew calendar has been based on the cycles of the moon, corrected to the solar year, with the *moled*, the "birth" of the **new moon**, signaling the start of each month. The Babylonians had a significant influence on the organization of the Hebrew calendar because of the Jewish **exile** in their midst. The current names for the months are all, in fact, Babylonian names. The year-numbering system is based on the years from **Creation** (PdRE 8).

The exact operation of the calendar has been a point of sectarian controversy throughout Jewish history. Some, like the **priests** who collected the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, adhered to an alternative **solar calendar** and despised the lunar system as an impure and wicked artifact of the **fallen angel**.[1] At times the Samaritans, who also possessed an alternative calendar, even attempted to interfere with the announcement of the Jewish new moon, which was determined by direct observation and then publicized using hilltop beacons (R.H. 22a). In later **Kabbalah**, the calendar is a divine manifestation, a feature of Malchut/Zeir Anpin. *SEE* Enoch; Moon; Numbers; Sun; Zodiac.

1. Elior, *The Three Temples*, 54–57.

Candle: (נר/*ner; nerot*). Candles are a symbol of the human **Soul** (Shab. 31b–32a). Consequently, they have significant ritual and customary functions in Judaism. They accompany Jews from birth to **Death** and beyond. The linking of light to life cycle is probably inspired by the passage, "The lamp of Adonai searches the spirit of a man; it searches out his inmost being" (Prov. 20:27). According to the **Talmud**, a light shines above the head of a soul while it awaits birth in the womb and the illumination allows the soul to see from one end of the universe to the other (Nid. 30b).

Candles can have mantic functions, usually two to burn when a soul will be extinguished. According to tractate Horayot 12a, a person may divine whether he or she will live out the year to come by kindling a lamp in a draft-free location. If the lamp or candle burns until its fuel is utterly consumed, the person would live. If, for whatever reason, it gutted before the fuel was used up, that is a sign that death would come that year. Apparently, this belief became so

widespread that a separate custom of lighting a candle for **Yom Kippur**> became conflated with this idea. In order to keep panic from sweeping a household, it was decided in eastern Europe that the **synagogue** sexton would tend all the candles together at the shul. That way, individuals would not know if any candles that extinguished prematurely among the multitude was their candle. For a Jew who had the misfortune to see their candle go out, it was said that if they made special supplications for the remainder of Yom Kippur and rekindled the light after the holiday, and it subsequently completely burned up, it was a sign that their repentance had redeemed them and the evil decree was repealed.[1]

Jews in Morocco had a variant belief. Two candles would be lit, one for each of a newlywed couple, and the first candle that went out would be an augury that that partner would die first. *SEE* LAMP; LIGHT.

1. D. Sperber, *The Jewish Life Cycle* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2008), 359, 569–570.

Candlestick: *SEE* MENORAH.

Cannibalism: Accounts of cannibalism in Jewish literature are to be found in accounts of starvation during sieges and famines (Lam.). *SEE* BLOOD LIBEL; GIANTS; HIRAM.

Carmel, Mount: (הר כרמל). Mountain on the coast of northern Israel, where the city of Haifa now exists. In biblical times, Carmel was evidently regarded as a holy high place dedicated to the God of Israel. **Elijah** fought his wondrous duel with the prophets of **Baal** and **Asherah** there (1 Kings 27:30), winning the argument when a miraculous fire from **Heaven** consumed his offering. It was later, while hiding in **Caves** there, that he was able to destroy troops of King Ahab, also by means of a flame strike. *SEE* FIRE; MOUNTAIN; SACRIFICE.

Caro, Joseph: Legalist and mystic (Turkish, ca. 16th century). Caro authored the Beit Joseph and Shulchan Aruch, the two most influential digests of Jewish **law** in history. He also kept, over much of his adult life, a personal mystical diary in which he records his regular encounters with his **maggid**, or spirit guide:

> No sooner had we studied two tractates of the Mishnah then our Creator smote us so that we heard a voice speaking out of the mouth of the saint [Karo], may his light shine. It was a loud voice with letters clearly enunciated. All the companions heard the voice but were unable to understand what was said. It was an exceedingly pleasant voice, becoming

increasingly strong. We all fell upon our faces and none of us had any spirit left in him because of our great dread and awe.[1]

Caro sometimes identified this figure as the Mishnah personified. Other times he called it the **Shekhinah**. The maggid revealed its *sod ha-Torah*, its **secret Torah**, to Caro via **xenoglossia**. The authenticity of this mystical testimony, published after his death in the collection Maggid Mesharim, has been regarded as suspect. Many found it hard to believe that such an acute legal mind also had such a bizarre esoteric inner life. Still, given that there are independent accounts of Caro's spiritual possessions written by his contemporaries, most scholars today accept the *Maggid Mesharim* as genuine eye-witness accounts of his mediumistic experiences. Caro also performed **exorcisms**. Some have argued his is the first recorded example of a Jewish exorcist who dealt with ghostly (as opposed to demonic) **possession**. *SEE* IBBUR; MEDIUM; VISION.

1. L. Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 123–51.

Carpet of Solomon: The collection *Beit ha-Midrash* includes a narrative of **Solomon's** magic carpet. Vast in dimensions, sixty miles by sixty miles, Solomon and his retinue of princes, animals, powerful djinns and soldiers in the thousands would sail across his lands. These adventures were occasions for the proud Solomon to learn humility.

Cat: Being domesticated rather late in human culture, and only in certain cultures, cats do not appear in Jewish literature before the Greco-Roman period. Attitudes towards cats (lucky, unlucky) varied from one Jewish community to another and may have been a reflection of how cats were viewed in the larger communities. One Kabbalist believed that the **Soul** of one who misuses the Divine name is reincarnated as a cat.

Offering menstrual blood to a cat, accompanied by the appropriate spell, can render a man impotent (Shab. 75b). Sprinkling the **ashes** of a female fetus of a black cat on one's eyes makes **demons** visible (Ber. 6a). In medieval Jewish communities, cat's **blood** was used for medicinal purposes (though was not in a potion to be consumed). Surprisingly, cats are never mentioned in Sefer ha-Razim, which provides one of the most exhaustive lists of Jewish *materia magica* preserved. *SEE* ANIMALS.

Caves: (מערה/*M'arah*). Caves are archetypal symbols of the womb, **Death**, and the underworld. Several caves are mentioned in Scripture, including the caves where **David** hid himself from **Saul** (1 Sam. 24) and the cave where **Elijah**

dwelt on Mount Horeb prior to his theophany from God (1 Kings 18). The cave most associated with supernatural events, however, is the Cave of Machpelah outside of Hebron, where Abraham's family interred their dead (Gen. 23; PdRE 39).

The Sages describe Machpelah as a nexus point of power, or even as the entrance to **Eden**. **Abraham** stumbles upon Machpelah accidentally, only to discover the perfectly preserved and radiant bodies of **Adam** and **Eve** inside. This is what inspired him to buy the cave, despite the exorbitant price (Gen. R. 58:8; Mid. Teh. 92:6).

The most famous cave in rabbinic tradition is the cave where Simon bar Yochai and his son hid from the Roman authorities:

> They went and hid in a cave. A **miracle** occurred for them: a carob tree and a spring of **water** were created. They sat up to their necks in sand. During the day, they sat and learned, and would cast off [their clothes]. At the time of **Prayer**, they got up and dressed, and covered themselves, and left, and prayed. Then they cast off [their clothes] again, lest they wear them out. They dwelt in the cave for thirteen years. (Shab. 33b)

Elijah finally appeared to them to announce the end of the Roman persecutions, but when they went outside, their gazes incinerated any impure thing they looked upon, whereupon God ordered them back to the cave for another year. They came out more reconciled to the flaws of the world, and Bar Yochai performed many **miracles** after that (Shab. 33b–34a; Gen. R. 79:6; Eccl. R. 10:9; PdRK 11:16). The **Zohar**, it is claimed, was written while Bar Yochai was in the cave.

Cemetery: (בית קברות/*Beit ha-Kevarot*, also *Beit Olam; Beit Chayyim*). A communal repository for the dead. As the resting place of corpses, the cemetery is regarded as *tamei*, an "unclean," or better translated, an "uncanny" place. As the abode of the dead, the cemetery is frequently regarded as a portal between this world and the next. As such, communion between the living and the dead is more possible there than in other locations.

In the **Bible**, the prophet **Isaiah** gives testimony to the practice of **incubation**, of people sleeping on a grave overnight with the goal of having a mantic or veridical dream (Isa. 8:19–22, 19:3). In rabbinic literature, the voices of the dead and/or actual **ghosts** are encountered there. It was also a place where **demons** and unclean spirits would lurk. Such traditions multiply in later Jewish writings. Eleazar of Worms (ca. 13th century) describes the lights of dead souls wandering

around cemeteries at **night**, engaging in some of the same activities as when they were living, such as conversation, **Prayer**, and **Torah study** (*Sefer Rokeach* 313; *SCh* 35, 452). Shabbatai Horowitz (ca. 18th century) recommended reciting Psalm 91 to drive away **demons** before entering a graveyard.

Like their non-Jewish neighbors, Jews of antiquity consulted the dead for advice, effectively ignoring both biblical and rabbinic prohibitions. Sefer ha-Razim provides a **ritual** for ghost summoning in a graveyard. Like their German neighbors, Jews of the Middle Ages believed that **herbs** gathered from cemeteries had great medicinal powers. One ritual recorded involves gathering them while reciting Psalm 19.[1] Ashkenazi **women** of the 17th and 18th centuries practiced the ritual of Kvorim Mesn, "measuring graves." They would loop tombstones, or even the entire cemetery, with candlewick, while reciting prayers. **Candles** made from these wicks were believed to be imbued with holiness and were used and given as donations to friends and **synagogues**.[2]

There is little evidence that human body parts were used by Jews for medical or magical purposes, though archaeologists in one exceptional case have found human finger bones imbedded in the walls of an ancient synagogue in Dura-Europos. *SEE* BLOOD; BODY; BONE; DEATH; LAMP; NECROMANCER AND NECROMANCY; YICHUDIM.

1. J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion*. Philadelphia, PA: JPS, 1939), 207.

2. R. Weissler, "Measuring Graves and Laying Wicks" in *Judaism in Practice: From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period*, L. Fine, ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 61–73.

Census: *SEE* COUNTING.

Centaur: (קנטאור). Centaurs were among the demonic offspring of the corrupt generations starting with Enosh. Centaurs were wiped out by **the Flood** (Eruv. 18b; Gen. R. 11:5, 23:6).

CHaBaD: (חבד). Also known as the Lubavitch Chasidim, CHaBaD is the second largest Chasidic community in the world, after the Satmars. The word "CHaBaD" is an acronym derived from the **Hebrew** words ***Ch**ochmah-**B**inah-**D**a'at* ("Wisdom-Insight-Knowledge"), the first triad of the **sefirot**. CHaBaD espouses one of the most complex mystical theosophies found among the Chasids, which is largely enshrined in the Tanya, written by CHaBaD's first **rebbe**, Sh'neur Zalman of Laydi. CHaBaD is also notable because, in contrast to most Chasidic groups, it maintains a strong culture of outreach to other Jews, making it one of the most accessible ways for nontraditional Jews to learn

Chasidic teachings. In recent years, the group has become highly controversial because many of its members insist their deceased rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, will return from the dead as the **Messiah**. Some Chabadniks have even gone so far as to declare Schneerson a divine being, advocating a kind of quasi-Christian heresy.[1]

1. D. Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference* (Oxford: The Littmann Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001), 104–5, 159–74.

Chafetz Chayyim: Rabbi and ethicalist (Israel, 1838–1933). Rabbi Meir Kagen, universally known as the Chafetz Chayyim, dabbled in the occasional spiritual **exorcism**.

Chalal: (חלל). “Void.” One of several terms used in Lurianic writings to describe the vacuum created by God’s **tzimtzum**.

Chaldean: A Babylonian. Later Jewish usage rendered it synonymous with “astrologer.”

Challah: (חלה). *SEE* BREAD.

Chalomot She ‘lot: (חלומות שאלות). “Dream Questions.” A **divination** ritual involving questioning **Angels**. *SEE* DREAM; INCUBATION.

Chamsa: (חמסתי חמשא). “Five.” A hand-shaped **amulet**. *SEE* HAND.

Chanameel: Cousin of the **Prophet Jeremiah** (Jer. 32), a prophet in his own right, and a master of esoteric powers. He could adjure **Angels**. During the siege of **Jerusalem**, he summoned armies of them to fight the Babylonians. Since this contravened God’s will, God changed the angelic names. In response, Chanameel summoned the *Sar Olam*, the “Prince of the Universe,” to lift Jerusalem into **Heaven**, where it waits to be brought down with the coming of the **Messiah** (*Eikah Zuta*, Lam. R. 2).

Chanina ben Dosa: Mishnaic wonderworker (ca. 1st century). Called an *ish ma’aseh*, a “man of [wondrous] deeds.” Many miraculous stories of him revolve around his abject poverty. Because of his piety, God replicated the **miracle** of the **manna** just for him. When a shrewish neighbor sought to humiliate Ben Dosa’s wife because of their poverty, God filled her oven with savory **bread** (Tan. 25a). So poor he was able only to bring a polished rock to the **Temple** as an offering, God sent angelic porters to him, who then teleported him there instantaneously.

In another legend, his wife prayed for some of his heavenly reward to come to them while they were still alive. A golden table leg miraculously appeared. But when Ben Dosa dreamed of a table in heaven with only three legs, he made her return it to its heavenly source (Tan. 24b).

Besides being a miraculous healer (Ber. 34b), he was invulnerable to reptile toxin (Ber. 33a):

> Chanina never permitted anything to turn him from his devotions. Once, while thus engaged, a lizard bit him, but he did not interrupt his prayers. To his disciples' anxious inquiries he answered that he had been so preoccupied in prayer as not even to feel the bite. When the people found the reptile, dead, they exclaimed, "Woe to the man whom a lizard bites, and woe to the lizard that bites R. Chanina b. Dosa!"

He once caused the beams of his neighbor's house to grow by means of a magical incantation constructed from the person's name. He had the power to stop and start the **rain** with a **Prayer** (Tan. 24b). He also made vinegar burn like **oil** (Ibid., 25a). Such was the power of his saintliness that he could overcome **Igrat**, a queen of demons (Pes. 112b). Other **miracles** are credited to him (Shab. 112b; B.K. 50a; M. Sot. 9.15; *En Yaakov*). It was said after his death that, "With his demise, men of wondrous deeds ceased to exist." *SEE* RIGHTEOUS, THE

Chanina ben Pappa: Talmudic Sage (ca. 4th century). Demonic forces periodically tormented him. He was once confronted by evil spirits while delivering **charity** at **night**, but drove them away with words of Scripture. On another occasion, his **Body** spontaneously erupted into sores in order to fend off a seduction. When **witchcraft**was used to cure them, he was forced to flee to maintain his modesty, only to end up in a haunted bathhouse (J. Pes. 8; Kid. 39b, 81a). He also received **dreams** that guided him in his teaching of the **Torah**. He was a close acquaintance of the **Angel of Death**, whom he was able to outfox for a month. Before he died, he was shielded by a **pillar** of **fire** and only died when he willingly acquiesced (Ket. 77b).

Chanina ben Teradion: Talmudic Sage (ca. 2nd century), he was one of the ten martyrs of the Roman persecutions. According to **RaSHI**, Ben Teradion knew how to use the power of the forty-two-letter **name of God** so well that he could obtain whatever he desired. Though a pious man, his martyrdom was punishment for abusing his occult knowledge (A.Z. 17b). Burned to death while

wrapped in a **Torah** scroll, he told his watching disciples that he saw the letters of the text flying off to heaven (BhM 2:64–72).

Chanting: Chanting is a spiritual practice that has occupied a central place in Jewish worship from time immemorial. The **Torah** and the rest of Scripture are chanted when read liturgically, following an ancient method known as *ta'amim*. The **merkavah** mystics likely chanted divine names and word **permutations** to achieve an altered state of consciousness. Chasids also use chanting, especially the distinctive musical form of the *niggun*, a wordless melody, to achieve states of **ecstasy**. *SEE* CHASIDISM; MUSIC.

Chanukah: (חנוכה). A minor Jewish holiday celebrated for eight days beginning on the twenty-fifth of Kislev. The centerpiece of the holiday is commemorating the **miracle** of **oil**, when a single day's worth of **olive** oil burned for the eight full days required to rededicate the **Temple**, which had been desecrated by Israel's enemies. This small wonder becomes the basis for many legends and folktales of miraculous events occurring at the Chanukah season. *SEE* MENORAH.

Chaos: (תהו ובהו/*Tohu* or *Tohu va-Vohu*). The primordial state of existence before the creation of the cosmos. In the **Bible**, God is the tamer of chaos, forcing it to conform to His will. God's words reshape chaos, usually imagined as a watery void, into sky, oceans, and land (Gen. 1; Ps. 104; Job 38). In ancient Pagan cosmogonies, the gods must battle personified chaos in order to create the universe. Personified chaos creatures, represented by **Leviathan**, **Rahav**, and **Behemoth**, are still found in Jewish mythology, but they are both figuratively and literally domesticated, becoming yet another of God's creations, and in some interpretations, God's actual pets (A.Z. 3b). Still, some biblical passages hint that chaos is a constant threat, a power that lurks at the periphery of the cosmos, and there is a danger it can be unleashed again, as it was in the **Noah** epic (Gen. 6–9). Even if physical chaos is restrained, moral chaos is still a force in the world (Pss. 44, 74). Chaos is also the antipode of life, and is often associated with death, a form of chaos that humanity reintroduced into God's universe (2 Sam. 22:5–6; Gen. 2–3). In the **End of Days**, God will finally and completely subdue all residual chaos, perfecting the world morally and defeating death utterly (Isa. 2, 25:8).[1] *SEE* ABYSS; DEATH; EVIL; FOUNDATION STONE; WATER; WATER LIBATION; YETZER HA-RA.

1. J. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 3–47.

Charba de Moshe: (חרבא דמשה). *SEE* SWORD OF MOSES.

Chariot: (מרכבה/*Merkavah*). These vehicles of ancient elites were also envisioned as the transport of the gods. The Canaanites described **Baal** riding on a chariot of **clouds**. Astral cults envision the orb of the **sun** as being the wheel of a celestial chariot. Sometime in the 6th century BCE, a representation of a sun chariot was installed in the **Temple** in **Jerusalem**, a move condemned by the **Prophets** (2 Kings 23:11–12).

God also rides a supernal chariot (Hab. 3:8). Like Baal**,** it is sometimes envisioned as a cloud (Ps. 104:3). One passage suggests God maintains a fleet of vehicles (Ps. 68:18). **Elijah** is transported to **Heaven** in such a cosmic chariot.

In the most detailed, albeit confusing, biblical description of God’s celestial chariot, it appears to be made of numinous creatures: **Chayyot**, **Ofanim**, and **Cherubim** (Ezek. 1, also see chapter 10). Many of the features of **Ezekiel's** chariot correspond to the objects and colors found in the Temple sanctuary, suggesting that God’s chariot is the pattern for the figures and implements found in and around the Holy of Holies. A heavenly chariot, with **Helios** steering it, also appears in Jewish **synagogue** art. According to **Talmud**, a mighty **Angel**, **Sandalfon**, stands behind the chariot at all times, while **Metatron** stands beneath its wheels. Many of these traditions overlap with the **Throne of Glory**, and the relationship between the two divine conveyances is, at times, confusing. Many scholars simply speak of God’s “Chariot-Throne.”



Judean coin with winged chariot

In later Kabbalistic texts, *merkavah* takes on a more expansive meaning, becoming an idiom for the **sefirot**, the totality of the **Pleroma**, the celestial order, or divine providence.

Some Sages declare the **Patriarchs Abraham**, **Isaac**, and **Jacob** to be the “chariot” of God, inspiring the mystical-ethical teaching that we likewise should

strive to be God's chariot in the world (Gen. R. 47:6). *SEE* ANGEL AND ANGELOLOGY; ARK OF THE COVENANT; CHERUB OR CHERUBIM; MA'ASEI MERKAVAH.

Charity: (צדקה/*Tzedakah*). Proverbs 10:2 declares "Charity saves from death." Many Jews have taken this admonition quite literally and generous giving to the poor and needy is perhaps the single most frequently prescribed preventative and protective remedy in all of Jewish folklore. Generous giving in this world also ensures **resurrection** in the **World to Come** (PdRE 33).

The appearance of a beggar or poor person is even regarded as a "gift" to the person encountering him, for God is providing an opportunity for the donor to gain merit (R.H. 16a; B.B. 10a; Zohar I:104a; *Sefer ha-Yashar* 13). Based on Psalm 111:3, **Isaac Luria** taught that giving charity leaves an enduring mark on the soul. **Chasidism** celebrates self-sacrificing charity and has numerous stories praising Chasidic masters who lived charitably and died penniless. *SEE* COINS; RIGHTEOUS, THE.

Charms: *SEE* AMULET.

Chashmal: (חשמל). The mysterious substance or entity illuminating the heart of **Ezekiel**'s chariot **vision** (Ezek. 1). The Talmud treats the word as a notarikon, the division of which reveals two words, "words" and "quiet." Thus the heart of divinity is a matrix of **silence** and speech from which **Creation** emanates (Chag. 14b).

According to **Midrash** Konen , Chashmal is the fiery substance that makes up the **pillars** on which the world rests. Noting that the **Bible** offers both a masculine and feminine spelling (Ezek. 1:4, 1:27, 8:2), some mystics think it signifies the masculine and feminine principle present simultaneously in divinity, as indicated by the existence of both masculine and feminine forms of the noun.[1] **gematria** yields several different equivalences: *ki zohar aish* ("Like a fiery brilliance"), and *kol minei zohar (*"all kinds of brilliance"), neither of which are terribly edifying, though a third, *dimyon tzivonim* ("image of colors"), perhaps links it to the **rainbow** (*Sodei Razaya*, p. 13).

But even these cryptic analyses can only approximate the truth. Those who truly comprehend the significance of Chashmal place themselves in mortal danger (Chag. 13a). Hechalot Zutarti and Midrash Konen (2:25) attempt to resolve the confusion by designating Chashmal as yet another class of angelic being. In Tikkunei Zohar 7b, it is one specific angel, **Metatron**. In modern

Hebrew, *chashmal* is the word for “electricity.” *SEE* CHARIOT; EZEKIEL; FACE OF GOD; VISION.

1. E. Wolfson, *Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism, and Hermeneutics* (New York: SUNY, 1995), 2–3.

Chasidei Ashkenaz: *SEE* GERMAN PIETISTS.

Chasidim, Sefer: “Book of the Pious.” This 13th-century book of ethical, esoteric, and occult teachings was the main and most influential work of the **German Pietist** movement. It was written by Judah ben Samuel ha-Chasid. It includes many fabulous beliefs and tales of the paranormal, including descriptions of **witches**, **vampires**, and visitations from **ghosts**.

Chasidism: (חסידים). While the word “Chasid” can refer to any pious Jew, in the last 250 years *chasidism* has come to mean a pietistic movement within Judaism that was founded by Israel ben Eliezer, the **Baal Shem Tov**, in 18th-century eastern Europe. It began among Jews who were reacting to the then domination of Jewish community life by an elite culture of rabbis and to the upheaval following the collapse of the messianic hopes raised by Shabbatai Tzvi. Chasidism stresses the superiority of religious enthusiasm and devotion over study and intellectualism. Many Jews found this message inspiring and the movement quickly spread through eastern and central Europe, especially among the poor and petty bourgeoisie.

The Baal Shem Tov taught largely through parables that stressed humility and **purity** of **heart**. He also drew heavily upon Jewish **mysticism**, particularly the teachings of **Isaac Luria**. He was also widely regarded to be an exceptional “**wunder-rabbi**,” performing many **miracles** and supernatural feats, as his title of Baal Shem suggests.

His immediate successors created a dynamic and charismatic movement of tremendous spiritual power and intensity, while later generations began institutionalizing these teachings. Divisions gradually arose, and leadership evolved into dynastic families, the heads of which were known as **rebbes** (“masters”) or *tzadikim* (“righteous ones”).

The Chasidic groups that survived the Holocaust (and many did not) differ in the degree to which they combine an intellectual emphasis with their spiritualism, which is now known as *Chasidut*. As the last truly pre-modern movement, they also hold to the accumulated supernatural and occult teachings of traditional Judaism. Most Chasidic groups today live in Israel and the United States.

While Chasidism is remarkable for its agenda of popularizing mystical/theurgic teachings and practices, perhaps the most unique feature of the Chasidic movement within Judaism is the exalted status of the rebbe, the charismatic leader of a Chasidic "court," who is perceived as a kind of perfected human who serves as a conduit between the Chasids and God. The Chasids assume, as a matter of course, that such spiritual enlightenment is accompanied by a mastery of spiritual and miraculous powers. Many disciples of a rebbe will appeal to him for **Prayer** and spiritual intervention on their behalf, so the rebbe plays a shamanistic role for many of his followers.

Most Chasidic communities are rife with tales of **miracles** that follow a yechidut, a spiritual audience with a *tzadik*: barren **women** become pregnant, cancer tumors shrink, wayward children become pious. Many rebbes dispense **segulah** charms and **healing** folk remedies. The spiritual power of the *tzadik* is such that after **Death** in this world, the proper name of a *tzadik* can be treated as a quasi-divine name and has healing powers. Therefore, the name of Chasidic masters may appear on **amulets**.

There is an enormous library of Chasidic metaphysics, philosophy, and mystical speculation that has been produced, the vast bulk of which remains untranslated from Yiddish.[1]

1. Rabinowicz, *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, 188–95. Also see Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 7, 1383–88.

Chatom ha-Merkavah: "Seal of the Chariot." A fragmentary text of merkavah mysticism found in the Cairo Geniza collection.

Chayyah: (חיה). "Life-force." In the later five-level configuration of the human **Soul** which developed in medieval **Kabbalah**, this refers to the fourth level, the higher moral consciousness.

Chayyei ha-Olam ha-Ba: "The Life of the World to Come." A mystical/theurgic manual by Abraham Abulafia.

Chayyim, Sefer ha-: (ספר חיים). "The Book of Life." Composed in the 13th century, this text includes mystical teachings on **astrology**, the divine **chariot**, and theurgic rituals, such as making a **golem**. Not to be confused with the celestial **Book of Life**, a legendary book which has the same **Hebrew name**.

Chayyot: (חיות). "[Holy] Beasts." Angelic entities that pull the divine **chariot**. Sporting four wings and formed of fire and light, they sing praises to God, but

also have flaming breath that is a threat to other angels. According to Hechalot Rabbati, each day they **dance** and cavort before God at the times of **Prayer**. They can smell when a living human enters the precincts of **Heaven**. (Ezek. 1; Chag. 13b; Gen. R. 2:2; Ex. R. 47:5; Mid. Konen; Zohar I). *SEE* ANGEL AND ANGELOLOGY.

Chelm: A mythical city of fools, not to be confused with the actual city of Chelm, Poland. Hundreds of Jewish parables, jokes, and short stories are devoted to the misadventures of the ironically dubbed *Chelmer Chacham*, "wise men of Chelm," whose deeds, springing from daft premises, silly rationales, and logic run amok, serve as proverbial examples of how reason and **wisdom** are not synonymous.[1]

1. Frankel and Platkin Teutsch, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*, 32.

Chemai, Rabbi: This minor Talmudic Sage is the purported author of the mystical tract Sefer ha-Iyyun.

Chemdat Yamim: This digest of Kabbalistic practices, a kind of mystical Shulchan Aruch, promises its rituals will affect **Tikkun** both on **Earth** and in the **Pleroma**.

Cherem: (חרם). "Ostracization/Excommunication." This is normally a form of legal punishment, a form of social isolation, not to be confused with the biblical concept of **karet**, being spiritually cut off. Yet in esoteric circles it is a term often used in **incantations** directed against **demons**, in effect legally excommunicating them. It is the theurgic equivalent of a "restraining order" on evil spirits.[1] *SEE* EXORCISM; GET; POSSESSION, DEMONIC.

1. Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 129.

Cherub or Cherubim: (כרוב/*Keruv*). "Mighty One." A winged numinous being in the service of God. A common motif in both Israelite and Pagan iconography, a cherub is a hybrid creature with a human head, avian wings, and a beastly **Body**, usually that of a **lion**. Such was a stereotypical way of illustrating a supernal entity in the ancient Near East, much like the modern convention of showing a glowing halo around the head of a spiritually enlightened being.



An 8th century CE Israelite carving of a cherub

The Israelites may have regarded them as the animating spirits of **winds** and **clouds** (2 Sam. 22:11). Josephus declares that their exact appearance was no longer known in his time. In the Talmudic accounts their appearance is more varied and less stereotypical (Suk. 5b; Gen. R. 21).

Cherubim guard the entry to the **Garden of Eden**. They were a repeated decorative image on the curtains in the **Temple** (2 Chr. 3:14), and two statuary cherubim sat upon the **Ark of the Covenant**, their wings coming together to form a “mercy seat,” or throne, for God. The voice of God would emanate from there (Ex. 25–26). The fact that cherubim are associated both with Eden and the Temple suggests that the inner sanctum of the Temple was perceived, either symbolically or mystically, as corresponding to the primordial Garden. Cherubim also served as the steeds or chariot of God (2 Sam. 22).

Cherubim are incorporated into the elaborate and systematic angelology of Early Judaism. They played a prominent role in the priestly spirituality of the **Dead Sea Scrolls** sect (*Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice*; 4Q385).Ranked above mere angels, **I Enoch** assigns them to the sixth and seventh heavens.

According to **Talmud**, when Israel offered its **Prayers**, the cherubim on the **Ark of the Covenant** moved in response. They would either turn to face each other or away from each other, depending on Israel’s state of **sin** (B.B. 99a). In Yoma 54a, Rabbi Katina goes even further, claiming the cherubim were actually sculpted in a posture of sexual union, signifying the mystery of God’s passionate love for Israel. Other Sages reject this legend. Still, the writings found among the Dead Sea Scrolls also hint at the idea that the paired cherubim on the Ark

somehow signified life and **fertility**, perhaps even a *hieros gamos* (4Q405, frag. 19).

Intuiting the intention behind their hybrid appearance, the medieval Kabbalists described the cherubim as symbolizing the union of **Heaven** and **Earth** (Zohar, Tem. 2). The **Zohar** further teaches that the two cherubim on the Ark represent the masculine and feminine divine attributes.

The idea that the cherubim serve as the creatures that pull the divine chariot and/or guard the **Throne of Glory** is a major theme in **Kabbalah**. Some writers even regard the cherubim as synonymous with the chariot itself (Ezek. 1; Gen. R. 21:9; Yoma 54a). *SEE* ANGEL AND ANGELOLOGY CHARIOT; CHERUB, THE UNIQUE.

Cherub, the Unique: (כרוב המיוחד/*Keruv ha-M'yuchad*). A medieval metaphysical concept of the Divine glory as forming a kind of anthropomorphic apparition visible to mortals. This was also the favored **meditation** technique, akin to creative visualization, practiced by the Circle of the Unique Cherub mystics. It consisted of forming a **vision** of deity (referred to as the "Unique Cherub") during **Prayer**, to serve as a bridge to the true, invisible Godhead. This practice is unique, in that it is virtually the only example in Jewish tradition in which one is encouraged to imagine what God looks like. *SEE* CHERUB OR CHERUBIM; FACE OF GOD; GLORY OF GOD; PESEK HA-YIRA'AH V'HA-EMUNAH; REIYAT HA-LEV; VISION.

Chesed: (חסד). "Love/Kindness/Devotion." The fourth of the **sefirot**. Chesed is born out of Binah and is the principle of boundless divine mercy, grace, and blessing manifest in **Creation**. It is part of the "right side," the masculine, positive divine energy. The limitless **love** of Chesed is balanced over against the power of Gevurah, God's justice and power. An excess of either degrades reality and threatens the existence of the universe. It is especially linked to the **Patriarch Abraham**, who personified Chesed in the world of action. It is sometimes called Gedulah and is symbolized by the **color** white.

Chet: (ח). The eighth letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**. It has the vocalic value of "kh/ch," the guttural "h." It symbolizes transcendence and grace.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 112–16.

Chibbut ha-Kever: (חבוט הקבר). "Torments of the Grave." The individual who has not led an exemplary life can expect to find the separation of the **Soul** from the **Body** extremely painful (*SCh* 30). Some teach that this pain is the result of the soul (specifically the **nefesh**) remaining close to the body and being forced to experience its gradual decay and disintegration (Job 14:22; Ber. 18b). Others

hold that punishments worse than what will be experienced in Gehenna befall the newly dead: floggings with whips of fire and **iron**, dismemberment by punishing angels and the like. **Domah**, the angel of the grave, comes to the soul to pronounce the judgment of chibbut ha-kever. Normally a soul can expect to be bound to the body for seven days (Zohar I, II). During this time the soul can also expect to revisit the episodes of its earthly existence (Tan. 11a). A medieval tractate, *Masechet Chibbut ha-Kever,* gives a detailed account of the process. *SEE* CEMETERY; DEATH; ETERNAL LIFE; JUDGMENT.

Childbirth: (לידה). As the first **commandment** found in the **Torah** (be fruitful and multiply), procreation occupies a special place in Jewish thought (Gen. 1). Being a liminal time when forces of life and **Death** potentially conjoin, it has attracted considerable occult interest. According to the Torah, giving birth brings with it a state of uncanniness or weirdness (in the Old English sense of the word). That plus the ample amount of **blood** and other bodily fluids expelled meant that a woman was rendered *tamei* ("impure") following childbirth, thirty-three days for a male infant, and twice that for a female (a blood-expelling event that yields a blood-expelling child). At the end of the period, **sacrifices** must be brought (Lev. 12:1–2). Beyond these, no other ritual or theurgic practices regarding childbirth are preserved in the TaNaKH. In the Scriptures, there are a number of births associated with miraculous circumstances, including the births of **Isaac** (Gen. 18–23) and **Samson** (Judg. 13).

By the time of the Rabbis, **Angels**, **demons**, and **witchcraft** began to be associated with birth (Ber. 8a; RaSHI on Sot. 22b; Zohar II:264b, 267b). In the face of the many threats to a woman in childbirth, there developed local theurgic customs and protective rituals. A copy of Leviticus might be put in the crib (*SCh* 1140), or **circles** drawn around the birthing bed, which would also be draped with **amulets** called *kindbet* in Yiddish ("child's crib"), or *chamsa* in Arabic ("five [fingers]"). In Poland, there arose the custom of "womb blessing" in the presence of a Torah scroll. In some communities, a Torah might be brought into the room to ensure a safe birth.

Psalms or germane biblical passages (Gen. 21; 1 Sam. 1) would be recited.[1] In an example of analogous magic, all the doors of the house would be opened and all the **knots** and bows of the woman's garments would be undone to ease the birth process. Alternately, some **women** would wear a sash, **amulet** belt, or even a Torah binder around the abdomen.[2]

Mother- and/or child-protecting amulets and **Prayers** were often mass-produced in Europe after the advent of the printing press.



A printed childbirth amulet against Lilith

In Oriental communities, charms made of precious **metals** (silver in particular, including **coins**) still continued. Many of these contained binding **incantations** or pleas that protective angels or meritorious **ancestors** drive off the lilot and/or destructive demons attracted by the birth. Many Chasids still use a **red** string, either blessed by a living **rebbe** or taken to a dead tzadik's grave, and then tie it on either the woman or the bed. Vigils called *tachdid* are still practiced by Oriental Jews in Israel to this day.

1. Klein, *A Time to Be Born*, 148–52.
2. Ibid., 111–15.

Children: Children are highly vulnerable to spiritual attack, so considerable thought and energy have been given in Jewish tradition to protecting children from **demons** and **witchcraft** through protective **prayers**, **incantations**, and **amulets**. Children can also be a source of mantic knowledge. The **Talmud** declares that **Prophecy** has been "given over to children" (B.B. 12b). While the **Talmud** probably meant this as a dismissive remark, some Jews have taken it seriously. Specifically, overhearing the biblical verses a student recites at his studies can be interpreted as **omens** (Chag. 15a; Git. 57a).

Likewise, from time to time there has appeared in Jewish literature the idea of child prodigies—that a child, either consciously or unconsciously, can have a special gift for prophecy. A child prophet arose in Spain during the 13th century, and another among the Jews of Poland in the 15th. *SEE* DIVINATION; EVIL EYE; KLEIDON; LILITH.

Children of Darkness: As described in the sectarian literature of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, the Sons of Darkness are the **demons** and their mortal minions of **evil** and impurity who work to undermine the authority of God. The **priesthood** in control of the **Temple** during the latter part of the Greco-Roman period was evidently the human side of this evil conspiracy. *SEE* WAR SCROLL.

Children of God: (בני האלהים/*B'nai ha-Elohim*). A term for the heavenly host; **Angels** (Gen. 6; Job 1). The singular term, *Ben Elohim*, son of God, is also an honorific given to Israelite kings of the Davidic line based on 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 2. This is not to be confused with the Christian doctrine that **Jesus** is the "only begotten son of God." The Children of Israel are also called God's "firstborn son" (Ex. 4:23). *SEE* ANGEL AND ANGELOLOGY; DAVID; RIGHTEOUS, THE; SON OF GOD.

Children of Light: This term, which appears in the non-biblical materials of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, refers to the good **Angels** and their priestly supporters who faithfully serve God and battle against the impure, demonic Children of Darkness. The conflict of the Children of Light and Darkness is a centerpiece of the dualistic mystical theology of the sectarian **priests** of **Qumran**. *SEE* WAR SCROLL.

Children of the East: Fabled magicians and astrologers. The phrase is based on 1 Kings 5:10 and Isaiah 11:11. This reflects a tradition about the legendary esoteric talents of the people of the "East" (**Egypt**, **Babylon**, and Persia). These skills included mastery of **astrology**, **horoscopes**, ornithomancy, and **divination** (PdRK 4). *SEE* EAST; NAMES OF IMPURITY.

Chiromancy: Palm reading. This form of augury first appears in Jewish circles in the **Dead Sea Scrolls** (4Q186). Examples of chiromantic diagrams in Hebrew have been preserved.

Chitzon, Sefer: (ספר חיצון). "Outside Book." The rabbinic term for any book of antiquity that appears intended to be taken as authoritative, but is not included in the Jewish scriptural canon. These books include works that claim to be written by biblical figures (**pseudepigrapha**), such as the Testament of Levi or the Books of **Enoch**, as well as **apocalyptic literature** and those books that offer "revised" accounts of those found in canonical books, such as Jubilees, which reworks Genesis, and the **Temple** Scroll, a revisionist version of Exodus-Deuteronomy.

Chitzonim: (חיצונים). "Outsiders." An alternative term for **kelipot**, the forces of evil.

Chiyya, Rabbi: Wonder-working Talmudic Sage (ca. 3rd century). He could make the **wind** blow and the rainfall by his **Prayers**. The **Talmud** hints that he could even raise the dead if he so wished (B.M. 85b).

Chochmah: (חכמה). "Wisdom." The second of the **sefirot**, it emerged from the primordial power of **Keter**. It in turn is the source of Binah. It is the first "being" to exist "outside" of God. It is equated with **Torah**, the blueprint through which God makes the universe. It is also called Abba ("father"), reflecting the fact that it is the first expression of the binary/dualistic nature of **Creation**. *SEE* Wisdom.

Chok l'Yisrael: An 18th-century collection of verses—biblical, rabbinic, and Kabbalistic—that are believed to be able to effect divine **Tikkun**, repair of the cosmos. The work is credited to **Chayyim Vital**. Jews are encouraged to recite these verses daily.

Choleim Chalom: "Dream Diviner." An oneiromancer, linked to false **Prophets** (Deut. 13:2). Yet based on the examples of **Joseph** and **Daniel**, in post-biblical Judaism dream interpretation is regarded as a respectable form of manticism. *SEE* DIVINATION; DREAM

Choni ha-Ma'agel: "Choni the Circle-Maker." Wonderworker (ca. 1st century BCE). This rainmaker was famous for his close relationship with God. Several stories about his using **magic circles** to make **rain** appear in rabbinic literature. His contemporary, the great Sage and witch hunter Simon Ben Shetah, expressed his great displeasure with Choni's theurgic antics, but in the end conceded that Choni had a unique relationship with his Creator. He once slept for seventy years (Tan. 19a, 23a). *SEE* RIGHTEOUS, THE.

Chozeh: (חוזה). "Seer." This person may be synonymous with a *roeh*; someone who experiences premonitory or veridical **visions**. *SEE* FACE OF GOD; PROPHECY AND PROPHETS.

Christian Qabbalists: As part of the Renaissance project to recover the teachings of the classical non-Christian past, a number of 15th-century Christian scholars became interested in **Kabbalah** and studied it under Jewish teachers. The most famous of these men is Pico Della Mirandola, but this number also includes Johannes Reuchlin, Pietro Gallatius, Francisco Giogio, and Egidio da Viterbo.

These men translated parts, even whole books, of Jewish **mysticism** for the use of Christian scholars, esoterics, and alchemists. Some even tried to use the doctrines of Jewish Kabbalah to prove the validity of Christian doctrine.[1]

Eventually these translated works were read and used by 19th- and 20th-century theosophists, influencing a variety of modern esoteric movements. Much of what is published under the rubric "**Qabbalah**" today is derived from these Christian Kabbalists. Such theosophical works are made up of metaphysical ideas stripped of their Jewish assumptions and teachings, often conflated with Christian and Hermetic teachings, and bearing little resemblance to the Jewish mystical tradition it purports to explain. *SEE* CHRISTIANITY.

1. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 196–201.

Christianity: A religion emerging from Judaism in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. From very early on, Christianity and Judaism were faiths competing on similar ground. Ideologically, both shared in the heritage of Israelite religion and its texts and both participated in the esoteric traditions of Jewish apocalypticism. In the matter of esoteric praxis, both engaged in spiritual **healing** and both had traditions of demonic **possession**. Other parallels, whether obvious or subtle, meant that even as critical ideological differences drove them apart, certain affinities remained. Religious leadership on both sides sought to keep those attractive elements of the competing faith at arm's length. Both groups regularly accused the other of engaging in **magic**, a term which already had a pejorative connotation in Roman times.[1] Thus, for example, in the **Talmud** we have one incident of a rabbi who is criticized for seeking a healer among the Christian community.

Likewise, despite the obvious Jewish roots of the spiritual healings performed by **Jesus**, early Christian leaders despised Jewish remedies and faith healing and equated them with **witchcraft** and devilry (*Dialogue with Trypho* 85:3; Council of Laodicea, Canon 35–37). Joannes Chrysostomus, for example, railed endlessly at their Christian congregants who sought medical or spiritual help in the **synagogues**. Chrysostomus in particular carried on about the "synagogue of **Satan**" where **demons** found refuge (Homilies against the Judaizers 1:6). This attitude became so pervasive that medieval Christians became convinced that Jews in general were practitioners of **sorcery**, and even simple Jewish customs and protective acts, like opening doors at a time of **Death**, or casting **Earth** at a funeral, were perceived as malevolent witchcraft and could bring dire consequences.

For a brief period during the Renaissance, Christians showed a renewed

interest in Jewish **Kabbalah** and theurgy.[2] But that same heightened consciousness of Jewish occultism yielded a harsh backlash against Jews during the Reformation period, especially given the witch-hunting hysteria of the 16th and 17th centuries. This pervasive and often destructive Christian stereotype of Jews helped contribute to the collective decision in the 18th and 19th centuries by the Jewish community to distance itself from the bulk of Jewish esoteric traditions and practices. And it is only in the last half century, when Christian opprobrium has been muted, that many Jews have again shown renewed interest in their own mystical and occult heritage. *SEE* BLOOD LIBEL; CHRISTIAN QABBALISTS; HOST DESECRATION.

1. L. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 274.

2. Langermann, "Magic and Astrology," *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance* vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribners & Sons, 1999), 3, 21, 23.

Chrysostomus, Joannes: Early Church Father and savage anti-Semite (ca. 3rd century). His anti-Jewish polemics proved very influential on subsequent Christian attitudes toward Jews and Judaism. Deeply offended by the good relations he observed between the Jews and Christians of his time, he authored a series of ferocious sermons directed at the Jews. Among the things he objected to, were the Christian use of Jewish faith healers and attendance of the Jewish holidays. Chrysostomus called the **synagogue** an "assembly of **Satan**" and declared Jews to be in the thrall of the demonic.[1] *SEE* CHRISTIANITY.

1. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 21, 58.

Circle: (עגול/מעגל/*Iggul/Ma'agel*). As a symbol of centrality and infinity, images of circles appear frequently in Judaism—the **Temple**, **Jerusalem**, and Israel are concentric circles of holiness in the world (MdRI BeShallach). As a sign of protection, **magic** circles first appear in Jewish tradition in the **Bible**, when Joshua encircles Jericho seven times in order to collapse its walls.

They also appear in **Talmud** and **Midrash** with the many stories of Choni ha-Ma'agel, Choni the Circle-Drawer, a charismatic figure who could cause **rain** (M. Tan. 3.8). It is a matter of debate whether the "heave offering" described in the **Torah** involved waving the offering in a circle. Certainly the custom of kapparah involves waving a chicken in a circle before it can become a substitute bearer of the sins of the individual. The use of protective circles, so familiar in medieval **sorcery**, also starts to appear in Jewish practice. Such circles were also used to protect the birthing bed of pregnant **women** (*Sefer ha-Chayyim* 2.8).

Smaller circles drawn around a wound or area of illness on a **Body** presumably exorcised the malaise-causing spirit.

The book Zera Kodesh ("Holy Seed"), written in the 16th century, describes making concentric circles on the ground (usually three or seven) with an **iron** blade, often with an inscription or the names of **Angels** added. The magical handbook Key of Solomon describes the use of magic summoning circles in some detail. The **Baal Shem Tov** once defeated a priest-witch by making a protective circle with his staff (*Megillat Setarim*).

Performative circles, created by walking or linking hands around someone to ward off the **evil eye**, came to be part of both Jewish **Weddings** and funerals. They are used in a variety of ways to treat illness.[1] European Jewish women would circle a **cemetery** in a ritual of **divination** (*Sefer ha-Chayyim; Ma'avar Yabbok*).[2] To animate a **golem**, an adept must circle the form 462 times while reciting the necessary incantations of animation (Pseudo-Sa'adia Commentary to *SY*).

1. Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors*, 147.

2. L. Fine, *Judaism in Practice*: *From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 61.

Circle of the Special (or Unique) Cherub: A modern term for the largely anonymous School of mystics (ca. 13th-century Rhineland) who focused their esoteric teachings on Sefer Yetzirah. Only Avigdor ha-Tzarfati and Elchanan ben Yakar have been linked by name to this mysterious group. They devote a great deal of their esoteric speculation to the meaning of the **cherub** that supports (or is) the **Throne of Glory** and is the mechanism through which the **Prophets** and mystics experience **visions** of God in physical form. They are the likely authors of several mystical tracts, but most notably what is now known as the "Pseudo-Sa'adia" commentary on Yetzirah (it was mistakenly ascribed to the 10th-century-CE Babylonian philosopher Sa'adia Gaon).[1] *SEE* BARAITA DE YOSEF BEN UZIEL; CHERUB, THE UNIQUE; PESEK HA-YIRA'AH V'HA-EMUNAH; PSEUDO-SA'ADIA.

1. Dan, *The 'Unique Cherub' Circle*, 56–75.

Circumcision: (ברית מילה/*brit milah*). The rite of circumcision, performed on a male child on the eighth day after birth, is regarded to be a "sign of the covenant" between Jews and God. It symbolizes the human role in perfecting God's **Creation**. It renders the males who undergo it *tam*, "perfected" (Gen. 17).

The **Bible** credits circumcision with having a protective power. In at least one enigmatic biblical passage (Ex. 4:24–26), circumcision thwarts a supernatural

attack. **Moses** had failed to circumcise his son, Gershom, and the **Talmud** explains that as a result Moses is all but swallowed up by an angelic/satanic force (versions vary: **Satan**, **Uriel**, **Gabriel**, and the team of Af and Chemah all are proposed in different texts) in the form of a **serpent**, but it is unable to go past "the sign of the covenant." When his wife **Zipporah** sees that the creature cannot engulf Moses's penis, she intuits the meaning of the attack. She immediately performs the rite on her son, and the attack ends (MdRI Yitro 1; Ex. R. 5:8; Ned. 31b–32a).

In the case of **Abraham**, circumcision overrides his **fate** as revealed in the stars (Ned. 32a). So awesome is the power of circumcision that in the **World to Come**, Abraham sits at the gates of **Gehenna**and does not allow any circumcised Jew to be taken there. **Domah**, the angel of the grave, is powerless to punish those who bear the mark of the covenant (and honored it in life by restraining their lustful impulses) (Gen. R. 48:8; Zohar I:8b). Since medieval times, when a *brit milah* is performed, a chair is set aside for **Elijah**, the "Angel of the Covenant," who is believed to be present at every *brit milah*.

The Book of Jubilees calls the uncircumcised "sons of Belial." In rabbinic literature, certain exemplary figures were born already circumcised, especially **Adam** and **Noah**.

The medieval mystics of the Rhineland found another rationale—that circumcision ensures entry into **Eden** in the World to Come. This they derive from a close reading of the Bible. For they take the wording of Deuteronomy 30:12, "Who among us will ascend into heaven?" and note that the first letter of each word in the phrase, מי יעלה לנו השמימה, spells *MILaH*, ("circumcision"). So, "Who among us will ascend into heaven?" The verse, it is claimed, provides its own answer—those who have been circumcised (Eleazar of Worms, commentary on Deut. 30:12).

Not that those without the seal of the covenant (gentiles and **women**, for example) won't eventually get to Eden. *Brit milah*, however, ensures one takes the shortcut. Thus the circumcised circumvent **Gehenna** (Gen. R. 21:9; Eruv. 19a). The same interpretation also discovers the **Tetragrammaton**, מי יעלה לנו השמימה, in the last letters of each word of the same phrase. This in turn provides an explanation (beyond the shape of the letter) for why later Kabbalists associate the **Hebrew** letter *Yud* (the first letter of the Divine name) with the **phallus**.

The **Zohar**, not surprisingly, finds supernal **secrets** underpinning the rite of circumcision. Moses de Leon, its author, was deeply engaged, if not obsessed,

with the numinous significance of circumcision. For example, de Leon, expanding on a Midrash appearing in Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer 29, posits that it is only through circumcision that a human is able to receive **Prophecy** and experience full *unio mystica*, mystical union with God (I: 97b–98a; also see Gen. R. 12:8; Tanh. Lech Lecha 20). Other sources interpret the "garment of skins" given to Adam and **Eve** when they are expelled from Eden to be a reference to the male foreskin and the female hymen. Therefore circumcision restores the male Jew to an Edenic level of access to God (*Ma'aseh ha-Shem*). In Lurianic thought, circumcision is a mimetic reenactment of divine sovereignty, and *tikkun ha-nahash,* the act that rectifies the **sin** of the serpent (disobedience to God) and facilitates the union of the male with the female dimensions of the **Pleroma**.[1]

More than that, in the Zohar and in subsequent Kabbalistic thought, the human penis is a reflection of the divine structure, the **sefirot**. This is based on the principle that what exists above is mirrored below. Thus God has a supernal "phallus," of sorts, but this aspect of God actually is androgynous, encompassing both the male and female principle; it is in itself combined to make the *hieros gamos*, a schema that (more or less) keeps this mystical doctrine within the bounds of Judaism's monotheism. While the shaft (Yesod/Tiferet) is male, the corona, as the phallic counterpart to the clitoris, is considered female (Shekhinah/Malchut). Therefore the act of human circumcision reveals the feminine aspect in the human male; *brit milah*, it seems, is an act of ritual androgynization (*Mashiv Devarim Nekhochim* 193–96; Zohar I:29b; *Shekel ha-Kodesh* 67). *SEE* PHALLUS.

1. E. Klein, *Kabbalah of Creation: The Mysticism of Isaac Luria, Founder of Modern Kabbalah* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2005), 102–103.

Cloud, Clouds of Glory: (ענן/*Anan*). As visible heavenly objects, clouds are often associated with supernatural phenomena. God rides upon the clouds (Ps. 104:3). Moreover, they serve as a mobile divine dwelling:

> He made darkness His screen; dark thunderheads, dense clouds of the sky were His hut (*sukkah*) round about him. (Ps. 18:11–12; Also see Job 36:29)

When God becomes manifest on **Earth**, clouds obscure what is happening (Ex. 19–21; Job 22:13; Ex. 19; Lev. 16:2). **Angels** also manifest themselves as clouds, most famously the **pillar** of cloud that guided the Children of Israel during the day on the **Exodus** (Ex. 13:21, 14:19–24).

According to rabbinic tradition, a cloud is a sign of the **Shekhinah**, the feminine divine presence (Gen. R. 1:6, 1:10). Such clouds hovered over the tents

of the **Matriarchs** (Gen. R. 60:16). Clouds (luminous shrouds called "Clouds of Glory" by the Sages) not only led the Israelites, but actually transported them, surrounding them on all sides and protecting them from the harsh desert environment, thus in the Tosefta we read concerning the Israelite's time in the desert:

> God gave to [Abraham's] children seven clouds of glory in the desert, one to their right, and one to their left, one before them, and one after them, and one above their heads, and one as the Shekhinah that was in their midst. And the pillar of cloud would precede them, killing snakes and scorpions, burning brush, thorns and bramble, leveling hillocks and raising low places, and making a straight path for them, a straight continuing highway …" (T. Sot. 4:2; Also see MdRI Bo 14; PR 20; *Targum Song of Songs*)

A sign of **Aaron**'s prophetic merit, these clouds had supernal letters written on them, serving as banners for each tribe. **Moses** ascended into **Heaven** to receive the **Torah** wrapped in clouds (Men. 29b; Shab. 88b–89a).

A pillar of cloud became manifest over the **altar** of the **Temple** on **Yom Kippur**, and its appearance was an augury of the future (Yoma 21b). The presence of these clouds diminished and eventually disappeared due to the accreted sins of Israel. Bar Nifli, "son of a cloud," is a title for the **Messiah**, who will appear riding one, according to the book of Daniel (7:13). Virtuosos of **Kabbalah**, such as Moses Cordovero, sometimes had pillars of cloud appear over or around them (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot*). In the liturgy, the worshippers invoke the "bright clouds" by which they mean, the sefirot (*Shofarot*, Musaf for Rosh ha-Shanah). The clouds of glory are most often understood to refer to the 10th Sefirah, Malchut/**Shekhinah** (Zohar I:18a–b).

Thus it becomes clear from all these images that the clouds of Glory are multivalent in their mythic significance; they symbolize divine presence (specifically the feminine divine presence), but also divine protection and favor, along with God's **love** and salvation.

Cock: (גבר/*gever*). Domesticated among Jews first during Greco-Roman times, roosters were a symbol of **fertility**. A cock would be carried before a newlywed couple on the way to the bridal chamber. According to some sources, the cock derives its knowledge of the **sun's** rising from the stirring of the **phoenix**, which, being a fellow avian, was detectable by the rooster. The cock is also the only animal that hears the cries of the **Soul** at **Death** (*Tanchuma*, Pekudei 3).

Given that one word for a cock is *gever*, which also means “man,” it is not surprising that roosters came to be used as magical substitutes. Thus a cock is used by a man to perform the substitution ritual of kapparah. A rooster can also be used for **divination**, by studying either the changes in its comb or the pattern of scratches it makes on the ground. It can also be used to make **rain** (Hor. 12a; *Sefer ha-Raziel*).

Codes: *SEE* ENCRYPTION.

Coins: Coins have several magical uses. They can be included in **amulet** bags (silver being repellent to evil spirits), made into magical **rings**, used as bribes for witches and even **demons**, or for **divination** (either flipping the coin or as part of more elaborate **rituals**). During the Middle Ages, Jews taught methods for using a divining rod to locate buried coins.

Color: Color has important symbolic meaning in Judaism. Most familiar are associations with the **tabernacle** (Ex. 25:2–8), such as purple (*argaman*) with royalty, deep blue (*techelet*) with **heaven**, crimson (*shani*) with **sacrifice**, white (*lavan*) with **purity**, and black (*shachor*) with mourning. **Adam** was created by the combination of dust of different colors—we are, in effect, a kind of animate sand painting (Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1:55). In **dreams**, all remembered colors are a good **omen**, except for blue (Ber. 57b).

Colors have a more powerful role in Kabbalistic thought (Zohar III:138b). The **sefirot** each have assigned colors.[1] Concentrating on colors was also a meditative **Prayer** device promoted by the **German Pietist** . Colors are incorporated into sympathetic rites of practical **Kabbalah** with the goal of activating those sefirotic qualities in the material world (*Pardes Rim-monim,* 32.2). Part of activating a particular divine attribute is imagining that particular color in one’s **meditations**, or even dressing in that color while performing the **ritual** (*Kedushat Levi*, Yitro). This is also part of making an efficacious **amulet** (*Pardes Rimmonim*, 10:1). All colors appearing in a dream, except blue, are a good sign (Zohar II:132b). Colors of particular significance include:

Black: In Kabbalah, it signifies Malchut/**Shekhinah**, the speculum “that does not shine.” It is the color of mourning.

Blue: The color of heaven is also the color of the Throne of God (Chul. 89a; *Sifrei Num.* 115), God’s **glory** (Ex. 24:10, 25:4; Num. R. 14:3), and Chochmah. It is the color of the special thread that is part of ritual fringes a Jew wears (Num. 15:38; Zohar III:138b). Blue was a featured color in the

tabernacle. Blue appearing in a dream signifies judgment or a warning (Zohar II:152b; Zohar III:139a). Blue is a good luck color, and in the Mediterranean, Jews paint their doors and window frames blue as a defense against the **evil eye** entering.

Bronze: According to Zohar, this color combines gold and silver, the two most divine colors, so it represents "the All" (*Zohar* III:138b).

Gold: Gold symbolizes Din, the quality of divine **judgment** (Zohar III:138b). It is also a symbol of **Jerusalem**, the "city of gold."

Green: This color is associated with Tiferet.

Purple: The color of royalty, purple was one of the colors God mandated be part of the tabernacle. It is the color of Chesed.

Red: As the color of blood, life, and alarm, red is often the preferred color in anti-demonic amulets. A scarlet cord hung in the temple on **Yom Kippur** >that turned white when Israel was forgiven. It is the color of Gevurah, God's attribute of power.

Silver: A sign of purity, it also has anti-demonic properties. Symbolizes the right side of the sefirot, it is the color uniquely claimed by God (Zohar III:138b; Hag. 2:8).

White: The color of light, holiness, purity, compassion, and the **moon**. Kabbalists engaging in mystical ascents, summoning of **Angels** , or other rituals of power will don white as part of their preparatory purification rituals.[2] Likewise the shroud a corpse is wrapped in after purification rites are performed is white. It is the color of the sefirot Tiferet and/or Keter (Zohar II:152b).

1. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 103–11.

2. M. Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (New York, SUNY Press, 1995), 198.

Comets and Meteors: Heavenly bodies that appear only irregularly, such as comets and shooting stars, are understood either as **omens** or as heavenly responses to events on **Earth** (Hor.; Ber. 58b). Rabbi Israel Isserlein, for example, took the appearance of Halley's Comet in 1456 to be a prodigy of God's **judgment** against the Hapsburg kings. *SEE* Brontology

Commandment: (מצוה/*Mitzvah*). According to rabbinic exegesis, the **Torah** contains 613 commandments from God. These divine instructions are the structural framework of Jewish religious observance and morality.

Community Rule or Rule of the Community: A document of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**that exists in several manuscript versions (4Q5; 1QRule; 1QS). Community Rule lays out the organization of the sectarian priestly group at **Qumran**. It also explains the group's dualistic ideology, the community's role at the End of Time, and teaches about the dual messiahs, the Aaronide and Davidic kings. *SEE* CHILDREN OF DARKNESS; CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

Conception: While a human **Soul** is waiting to be born, the **Angel** of conception, Lailah, teaches the soul all the **Torah**. The soul is also shown the full breadth of the universe, the **Garden of Eden**, and **Gehenna**. When the time for birth arrives, Lailah strikes the fetus on the upper lip. This creates the dimple beneath the nose. More importantly, all that the soul has learned enters the subconscious and is forgotten until it is relearned in the world. When that soul is ready to return, Lailah is the angel that escorts it back (*Tanchuma* Pekudei 3). The Tanya offers a different, very elaborate metaphysical model of conception in which the soul is a polypsychic entity composed of elements from different spiritual source points.

Copper Scroll: Found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, the Copper Scroll consists of three copper sheets riveted together, now broken into two. Inscribed upon it is a list of hidden treasures buried around **Jerusalem**. The treasures listed, taken together, amount to tons of **gold** and silver. Some theorize that it is a record of the **Temple** treasury, concealed for the duration (or such was the plan) of the Jewish Revolt in or around 66 CE. So far, none of the purported treasures it described have been located.

Cordovero, Moses: Ethicalist and Kabbalist (Turkish, ca. 16th century). A student of Joseph Caro, he is the author of Pardes Rimmonim, Tomar Devorah, and other works. He taught a comprehensive and, at times, obtuse mystical theology. He received visitations from **Elijah** and was said to be the biblical Eliezer reincarnated. He was a teacher of **Isaac Luria**, though Luria developed a very different mystical worldview. According to one account, a **pillar** of **cloud** or **fire** hovered over his **Body** during his **burial**.

Corpse: *SEE* BODY; BURIAL.

Countenance, Divine: *SEE* FACE OF GOD.

Countenance, Prince or Angel of the [Divine]: (שר הפנים/*Sar ha-Panim* or *Malach ha-Panim*). A Sar ha-Panim is an **Angel**, or angels, that either serve as a visible manifestation of God in the midst of people, or serve in the presence of God. The belief in this particular angel is based on Exodus 33:14, which, translated literally, has God telling **Moses**, “My Countenance will go [with you] but I will depart.” This angel is mentioned explicitly in Isaiah 63:9.

The **Midrash** describes four high angels who simultaneously attend at God’s throne and to watch over the Israelite encampment in the **wilderness**:

> As the Holy One blessed be He created four winds and four banners, so also did He make four angels to surround His Throne—Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael. Michael is on its right, next to the tribe of Reuben; Uriel on its left, next to the tribe of Dan, which was in the north; Gabriel in front, next to the tribe of Judah, also Moses and Aaron, who were in the east; and Raphael in the rear, next to the tribe of Ephraim which was in the west … (Num. R. 2:10)

These four are not explicitly called *Sarei-Panim*, even as they fill the roles generally associated with an angel of the countenance.

Metatron is the angelic figure most associated with the *ha-Panim* title. Other angels, such as **Suriel** and Tzakadhazy, are also called by the title *ha-Panim*, leading to some confusion. Are all these angels actually different names for Metatron, as one tradition suggests, or are the *ha-Panim* really a whole class of angels, of which Metatron is only the most famous? There is no definitive answer. *SEE* SAR.

Counting and Census: The numbering of people is a sensitive issue in Jewish tradition. God repeatedly punishes the Israelites for taking any unauthorized census (2 Sam. 24; II Chron. 21). In later Jewish tradition, counting people invites the unwanted attention of the **evil eye**. In order to make sure a minyan (ten people) is present for a public service, it is customary to have each recite one word in a ten-word phrase, such as “Deliver Your people and bless Your Heritage, sustain them forever.” When there are enough present to complete the phrase, the service is ready to begin. Another solution is by simply reversing what one says, as in “not one, not two, not three …”

Covenant, Angel of the: *SEE* ELIJAH.

Creation: One of the principle cosmological teachings of Judaism is that the universe is created by God. Rabbinic teachings include much more information

about the origins of the universe than are found in the biblical account.

Personified Torah is God's "architect" in the design of Creation (Gen. R. 1.1). In the course of God reshaping the primordial **chaos**, some of the six days of Creation have special significance. The second day, Monday, is the only day of Creation that God does not bless. This is because God created **Gehenna** on that day (Gen. R. 4:6; 11:9). It is therefore a bad luck day. On the other hand, the third day is blessed twice by God, making it a propitious day, especially for beginning a new enterprise, like a **marriage**. According the **Zohar**, since the word for "light" in Genesis 1:14, *me'orot*, is lacking one letter, this reveals a deficiency in that light of the fourth day, signaling the emergence of **evil** in Creation (without the *vav* normally present, the word can be read as *me'erot*/"curses") (Tan. 68b; PdRK 5:1; Zohar I:12a, 33b).

The waters of the **abyss** that preceded the Creation are now trapped beneath the **Earth**, held at bay by the *Even ha-Shayitah*, the Foundation Stone. God removed this stone for the great **Flood** of **Noah**'s time. The design of the **tabernacle** and the **Temple** that followed it are microcosms of Creation (Ex. R. 35:6; Num. R. 12:13). The human **Body** also embodies the entire universe in microcosmic form.

Mystical works such as Sefer Yetzirah, Midrash Konen, and particularly the teachings of Isaac Luria detail the intimate structure of Creation, the metaphysics of the divine speech that created the world, and the powers of creation that human beings can access.

The Chasidic philosophy of Tanya (219, 320) teaches a kind of subjective acosmism: while we experience the reality of Creation, from God's perspective there is no beginning to the universe, as it were, and all distinctions made manifest through Creation are not "seen" by the Creator—it all remains undifferentiated "oneness." [1]

The mystical project is to restore to humans the capacity to see the world from God's perspective, at which point Creation will reverse itself and all "being" will revert to "no-thing-ness." *SEE* ADAM KADMON; EMANATION; MA'ASEI-BERESHIT; TWILIGHT.

1. Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 2, 160–63; Rabinowicz, *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, 74.

Crimson Cord: *SEE* SCARLET CORD.

Crown: (כתר/*keter* also *koteret; atarah*). Crowns are a symbol of authority and power. There are four crowns in Jewish tradition: the crown of royalty, the crown of **priesthood**, the crown of **Torah**, and the crown of a good reputation (Avot

4:17).

Both the king and the High Priest wore types of crowns. In some Jewish communities, brides and grooms are crowned at the **Wedding**. The only fabulous crowns mentioned in the aggadah are the one million, two hundred thousand crowns placed on the heads of Israel (two for each male—God assumed they would share with the **women**) by **Angels** at **Mount Sinai**. Those crowns were taken back by God after the golden calf incident (Shab. 88a).

Crown of God: The **crown** of God is constantly being woven by the **Angel Sandalfon** from the **Prayers** of Israel. It bears the **Tetragrammaton** on its front. It is multihued, reflecting the many different prayers offered to God. There is one description of God wearing ten crowns, which the mystics take as a reference to the sefirot (Ber. 55a; Chag. 12a, 13b; Ex. R. 21:4; Mid. Teh. 88:2; Zohar I:132a, 168b). Based on their appearance in the **Bible**, and the using the principle that all biblical terms are allegories of the **Pleroma**, kabbalistic thought distinguishes two "divine crowns," **Keter** ("crown") and Atarah ("diadem"). These terms are applied to different aspects of the divine process, the application varying widely from author to author and system to system. One of the most common is to assign the term *Keter* to the primordial creative impulse, and *Atarah* to the generative aspect of the God, the divine **phallus**.

Crypto-Jews: Jews (mostly from the Iberian Peninsula) who, after coerced conversion to **Christianity**, secretly maintained Jewish practices.

Crystal: *SEE* GEMSTONES.

Cures: *SEE* HEALING.

Cures, Book of: A powerful tome of **healing** mentioned in the **Talmud**. King Hezekiah hid it away because of the impiety of his people (Pes. 56a; M. Pes. 4:9; RaDaK's comments).

Curse: (מארה, קללה). A verbal invocation to bring harm, **evil**, or detriment on another. More than a threat or a wish, a curse is assumed to have the power to make the desired harm a reality.

Two elements make up the logic of cursing: a magical/symbolic view of causality and "formalism," the belief that a speech-act has power, regardless of intention, justification, or authority.[1] While some assume that the "power" of the speaker underpins the efficacy of the curse (Num. 22:3), because of formalist

assumptions in rabbinic thinking, even curses uttered unintentionally by ordinary people have the potential to be detrimental (Meg. 15a–b, 28a).

God has the power to both bless and curse creation. Both powers are demonstrated in the first three chapters of Genesis. Humans also have the power to curse individuals and whole classes of people (Ps. 35). Some biblical authors simultaneously try to limit the use of curses and undermine their formalist assumptions by claiming unjustified curses will have no effect (Prov. 26:2).

Curses can be absolute or conditional. An absolute curse is meant to be immediate (Gen. 4:11; 2 Sam. 16). A conditional curse only become efficacious when certain conditions are met or violated (Deut. 27–28). A notable form of conditional curse that appears in the **Bible** is the conditional self-curse (1 Kings 19:2, 20:10). Often included in an oath, this curse was placed on oneself accompanied with a symbolic act of destruction—shattering a pot, chopping up an animal, or some other deed that signified what would happen to the one making the vow if he or she should fail. Even God uses a form of this when making a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:7–21).

There are several **psalms** that are, or contain, extended curses. Psalms 35, 58, 137 all invoke hair-raising afflictions upon the writer's and/or reciter's enemy. Psalm 109 is the ultimate execration text:

> May his days be few; may another take over his position.
> Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.
> Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg:
> Let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.
> Let the extortioner catch all that he has; and let the strangers spoil his labor.
> Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children.
> Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.
> Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with Adonai; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.
> Let them be before Adonai continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.

The Sages elaborate upon these biblical beliefs (Mak. 11a; Eruv. 18b–19a; Tem. 3b–4a; Mak. 16a). **demons** as well as human beings can utter curses. Using a curse can actually invite unwanted demonic attention on the person uttering the curse. The Talmudic Sage Rav reportedly had the power to curse others with

sterility (Shab. 108a). At least one Sage, Joshua ben Levi, had the power to curse crops, though cursing people was another matter:

> There was a non-believer who lived near Rabbi Joshua ben Levi. This heretic would harass the sage by challenging the validity of scriptural verses. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi was exceedingly agitated. One day he took a rooster and tied it between the feet of a bed. He [one can discern a moment of divine anger by the color of a cockscomb] waited, wide-eyed. He thought, "I will wait for the moment and curse him." At the crucial moment, however, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi dozed off. Opening his eyes, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi concluded: "It is not proper to act so, to curse people, even if they are wicked. Moreover, it is written 'His mercies are on all His handiwork' (Psalm 145:9) and it is also written 'For the righteous to punish is not good.' " (Prov. 17:26; Ber. 7a)

In the Jerusalem **Talmud**, tractate Chagigah, we read that the curse of Simeon ben Shetah's son was considered so potent that eighty witnesses recanted their perjury rather than see his curse realized.

In Hebrew magical texts of late antiquity, several aggressive or "binding" spells are to be found, many favoring the wording of curse **psalms** like 109. Most are aimed at demons, but a few are directed against other human beings, similar to the *defixiones* tablets found in Greek magic. Texts such as Sefer ha-Razim and Sword of Moses, which have moved beyond the constraints of rabbinic prohibitions, are the most flagrant in the kind of curses they record. *Sefer ha-Razim*, for example, teaches that the "angels of *Chimah*" (wrath) that occupy the second camp of the first level of **Heaven** will carry out a variety of curses at the command of the properly prepared adept: they will inflict "combat and war and are ready to torment and torture a man to death." Specific curse formulae include capsizing a boat, collapsing a wall, sending someone into exile, breaking **bones**, blinding and/or laming, even undermining business dealings.

Medievals believed that even reading those portions of the Bible that recount God's curses against disobedient Israel (Deut. 27–28; 31:3; Ps. 109) could result in those curses being realized, so those portions were read rapidly in a whisper, a custom still observed today in many congregations. **Chayyim Vital** believed Psalm 109:6, "Appoint over him a wicked man and may **Satan** stand by his right hand …" allowed King David (and others) to afflict an enemy with a dybbuk (*Sha'ar ha-Yichudim* 16a).

The exact mechanism of cursing varies. As noted above, a curse can follow simply because of an utterance. Thus we read:

> Moses is not mentioned in the portion [Tetzaveh] … The reason for this is that Moses said to God: "Wipe me out from Your book [Ex. 32:32]" and the curse by a righteous person is fulfilled, even if it is made conditionally. (*Baal ha-Turim*)

Jewish magical texts, however, generally require more effort. *Sefer ha-Razim*, aping Greek Pagan magical practices, requires *materia magica* along with specific **rituals** and **incantations**. Timing and astrological influences can also increase or mitigate the power of a curse. The practice of cursing is still with us. In a much-publicized event during the 1994 Israeli elections, a Kabbalist put a *pulsa denura* (lashes of fire) curse on candidate Yitzchak Rabin because he supported territorial compromise with the Palestinians.[2]

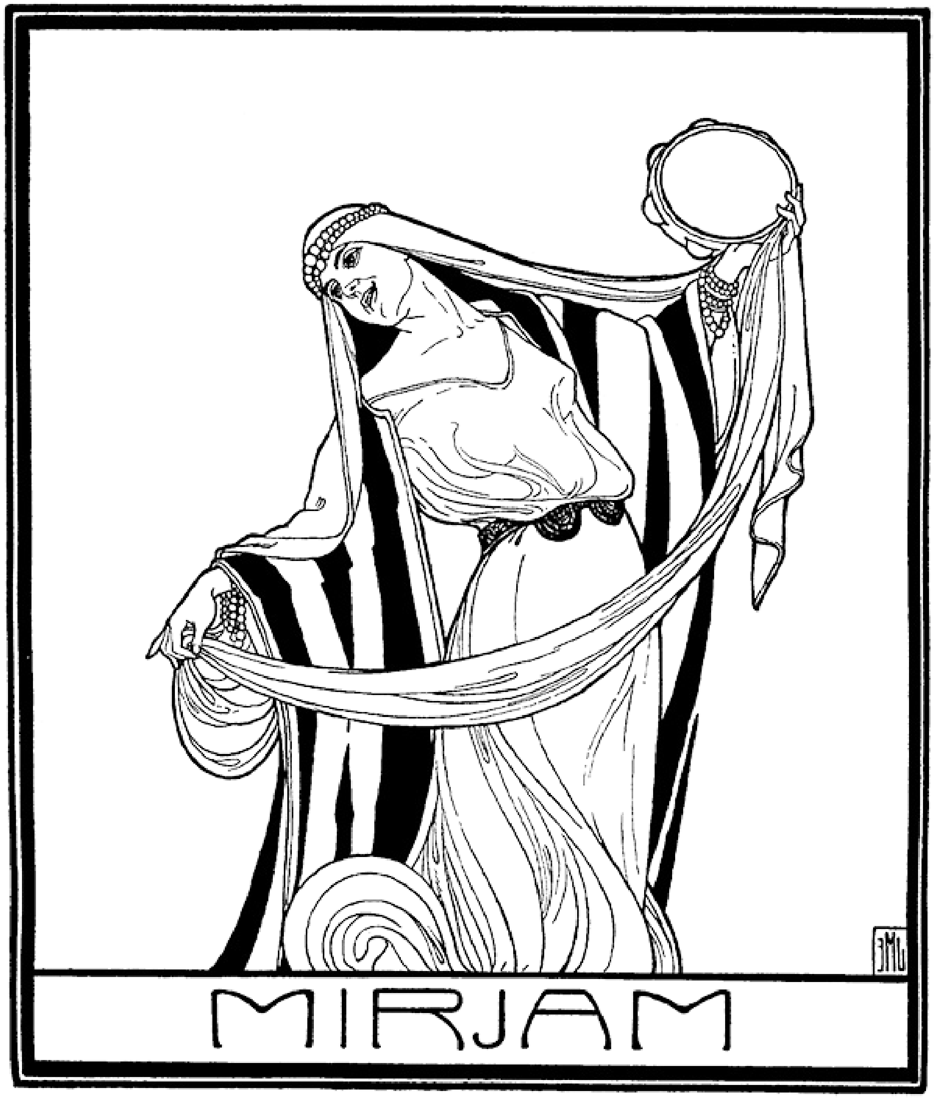
1. Lauterbach, "The Belief in the Power of the Word," 287–89. Also see H. Brichto, *The Problem of "Curse" in the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: JBLMS 13, 1963).

2. D. Horowitz, ed., "Rabbis Placed Ancient Curse on Rabin," *The Jerusalem Report* (Nov. 16, 1995).

Curtain: *SEE* PARGOD; TEMPLE.

Curtain of Heaven: Sometimes identified as the first of the **seven Heavens**, the curtain of heaven conceals the **Throne of Glory** from the sublunary spheres. According to the Talmudic Sage **Resh Lakish**, the curtain of heaven is drawn back at dawn and spread each evening, producing the effect of day and **night**. It is rolled up during the passing of **comets**, briefly revealing the **firmament** in all its glory. **Angels**, **demons**, and **ghosts** can hear the **decrees** and conversations of the divine court from behind the heavenly veil. *SEE* PARGOD; RAKIA.

D



Da’at: (דעת). “Knowledge/Union.” In the **Torah**, *Da’at* can mean a variety of things, from simple understanding to sexual intercourse (as in Genesis 3, “and he *knew* his wife and she conceived …”). In Jewish **mysticism,** Da’at is a mysterious (even for **Kabbalah**) harmonizing principle that is sometimes included as part of the sefirotic system, though often not. In some systems, it is an aspect of Keter, balancing Chochmah and Binah. In others, it is the offspring of the two, the merging of **wisdom** and insight. These lead some systems to equate it with Torah.

In other interpretations, drawing on its sexual connotation in biblical parlance, Da’at is the principle of *hieros gamos*, unifying the higher **sefirot** Chochmah and Binah in their purpose of giving birth to the lower sefirot and directing the

effluence from the higher sefirot into the lower ones (*Etz Chayyim* 39:7, 72b–c). Da’at is perhaps most prominent in the theosophy of the Hasidic ChaBaD movement. Some Kabbalistic models, on the other hand, do not speak of Da’at at all.[1]

1. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 107; M. Idel, “Sexual Metaphors and Praxis in Kabbalah,” in *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory*, D. Kraemer, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 209.

Dagim: (דגים). “Fish/Pisces.” The **zodiac** symbol of the Hebrew month of Adar. It signifies opposites, disparity, **night**, moisture, and the ascendance of the feminine principle. The festival of Purim falls under this sign. The arch-villain of the Purim story, **Haman** (Book of Esther), used his knowledge of **astrology** to choose Adar to implement his plan to eradicate the Jewish people because, as the last month of the biblical **calendar**, it was a time when the Jews were particularly vulnerable. His plans went awry because he did not understand the special providence of Israel that protects it from the adverse influence of the stars. The fact that Haman was undone by a woman, **Esther**, would be characteristic of the feminine power manifest under this sign.[1]

1. Erlanger, *Signs of the Times*, 245–63.

Dalet: The fourth letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**. The word *dalet* means “door.” It is associated with the sefirah of **Malchut**, the “lowest” of the **sefirot**. Thus dalet can signify lowliness, humility, and poverty. It has the numeric value of four in **gematria**.[1] *SEE* NUMBERS.

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 78–84.

Damascus Document: Versions of this mysterious sectarian text have been found only among the ancient **Dead Sea Scrolls** and the medieval Cairo Geniza. Scholars remain puzzled over this long history (over a thousand years) of otherwise invisible transmission. Who cherished this document enough to continue copying it for a millennium? Why are there no other traces of it during that time span, or beyond? It was clearly important to the Dead Sea Scroll community (fragments of eight copies were found at **Qumran**) and reflects the priestly ideology of that group, but it is never quoted or cited in traditional Jewish sources, so what group of Jews continued to use this document, unknown to the Jewish world at large? A number of theories have been floated, none of them terribly satisfactory.

Beyond a series of arguments about Jewish **law** and custom that are pointedly at odds with the way they are treated by rabbinic Judaism, the most notable occult ideas found in the document are a dualistic doctrine that the world is

divided between **Children of Light** and **Children of Darkness** who are in perpetual war, the teaching that God has deliberately led the gentiles of the world astray, and the belief that there will be two messiahs, an Aaronide, or priestly **Messiah**, as well as a Davidic, or royal messiah.[1]

1. Schiffman and VanderKam, *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 1, 166–70.

Dan: The biblical tribe descended from **Jacob**'s fifth son. Guilty of **idolatry** (Judg. 18) and other faults, according to the biblical accounts, Dan became associated with sinister and malevolent forces. Some texts of **apocalyptic literature** and midrashim regard Dan as a source of darkness and conflict. Early Christian tradition, evidently picking up on this theme, expresses the idea that the Antichrist will be a Danite. On the other hand, in the **Talmud**, tractates Sanhedrin and Shabbat contain a tradition that the general of the Messiah's armies will be from the tribe of Dan. *SEE* ESCHATOLOGY; MESSIAH.

Dance: (מחול/*Machol*, רקוד/*Rikod*). "Praise Him with timbrel and dance" (Ps. 149:3). Dance is a spiritual technique used by humans across the globe, particularly for inducing altered states of consciousness. It is also closely tied to eroticism, spiritual or otherwise.[1] Ecstatic dance is a very ancient Jewish practice, being mentioned several times in the **Bible**, particularly in the books of Samuel (1 Sam. 10:10–11, 19:20–24; 2 Sam. 6:14–16).

There are multiple theurgic uses for dance. According to Pseudo-Sa'adia's commentary on Sefer Yetzirah, dancing in **circles** is a necessary element in the animating **ritual** for a **golem** (42b). Dance and **incantations** for protection are part of the ceremony of the **new moon**. Dance can also be therapeutic. **women** would dance and sing for those suffering from spirit **possession**.[2] In the medieval text *Ma'avar Yabbok*, it is explained that ten pious men can destroy any demonic offspring made by a man in his lifetime if they dance in a circle seven times around his corpse.

Basing the practice on the verse "All my bones shall say, 'Who can be likened to You?' " (Ps. 35:10), **Chasidism** has a celebrated tradition of dance as a spiritual discipline. Some Chasidic masters taught mass group dances of yichudim ("unification") meant to draw down the **Shekhinah** and the presence of **Angels** (*ShB* 61). In the **Zohar**, the Kabbalists celebrate the **Torah** wisdom of a child prodigy by dancing him around on their shoulders (I: 240a). Dancing with Torah is a recurrent metaphor for **study** and devotion to study (*Tiferet Uziel*, 125). Acrobatic dancing at **Weddings** and other celebrations is also a noted

Chasidic custom. Dance continues in modern Judaism, mostly associated with the holiday of Simchat Torah, when Jews gather to dance with the Torah scrolls.

Even the angels dance; each day the **Chayyot** dance before the **Throne of Glory**during the hours of **Prayer** (*Synopse #189; Seder Rabbah d'Bereshit; Hechalot Rabbati*). Dance will continue in the **World to Come**, as described in Song of Songs Rabbah (End), when the righteous shall join God in an eternal dance of joy. *SEE* MUSIC.

1. E.Wolfson, *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995), 130.

2. Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors*, 83.

Daniel: Carried off into **exile** as a child and raised in the Babylonian court, Daniel is the protagonist of the biblical book of Daniel. Daniel is one of only two figures (the other being **Joseph**) associated with **magic** that the biblical authors view in a favorable light. It may be significant that both men's extensive involvement with magical practices occurs in the context of exile to a foreign court.

According to the book of Daniel, because of his extraordinary ability to scry the king's **dream** without being told its content, the King of **Babylon** appoints Daniel "chief prefect over the wise men of Babylon" (2:48). This elicits tremendous jealousy among the professional magical class of the court. Interestingly, the book of Daniel never actually credits Daniel with another miraculous act, though miraculous things happen for his benefit, such as God shutting the mouths of the lions when he was cast into their den. His chief talent seems to be oneiromancy, interpretation of dreams, and he is vouchsafed a series of highly symbolic visions of apocalyptic content. Puzzlingly, unlike other biblical figures, the Sages do not elaborate much on the biblical accounts of Daniel, nor do they credit him with many additional supernatural feats. *SEE* APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE.

Dargesh: (דרגש). A good luck charm for a house, apparently a bench or a bed. It was believed that a bed not slept in overnight was a good **omen**, so a dargesh (or sometimes, a "bed of **Gad**") provided perpetual fortune (B. Ned. 56a; Sanh. 20b; M.K. 27a). Ancient Mesopotamians would keep a "ghost chair" in their homes, so perhaps the dargesh was likewise intended to signal to beneficent spirits that the home was a welcoming rest spot. The "Chair of Elijah" present at a **circumcision** conveys a similar message. In *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* 22, we learn that spirits expect seating to be provided when they visit the living. *SEE* ELIJAH;

GHOST; HOSPITALITY.

Darkness: (צושך/*choshek*). The original state of the universe before God brought forth the cosmos; darkness is also a creation of God:

The rabbis taught:

> "Three things were made before the creation of our world: Water, Wind, and Fire. Water birthed darkness, Fire birthed light, and Wind birthed wisdom." (Ex. R. 15:22, also Isa. 45; PdRE 3)

The Hebrew **Bible** sometimes likes to use darkness as an antipode and as a contrast to life and good. It is the lurking place of evil spirits (Ps. 91:5; *Pas.* 111a–b). Darkness is often a symbol of ignorance, dread, or evil, especially in eschatological imagery (Am. 5). Darkness is one of the ten **plagues** that afflicted **Egypt** during the **Exodus**. It is the lurking place of evil and unclean spirits, which is why both the Bible and the **Talmud** teach that **night** is a spiritually dangerous time. **demons** even dwell in certain kinds of shade—that of a lone palm **tree**, a jujube, a caper, and thorny bushes with edible fronds (Pes. 111a–b). In the Kabbalistic work Galya Raza, the fact that darkness preceded **light** signifies that evil has dominance over good in **Creation**, a remarkably pessimistic worldview for a Jewish document.

Just as often, however, darkness is understood dialectically, as a complement to light and is exalted and celebrated, as evidenced by the daily **Prayers** *Yotzer Or* and *Ma'ariv Aravim*. In the **Zohar**, darkness is a fiery primordial substance and a manifestation of the sefirah of Gevurah (I:16b, 112b).

Kabbalah builds on this dialectic, teaching that just as the **Body** is a **garment** for the **Soul**, darkness is a garment for light. And just as the body is an expression of the divine as much as the soul (*Igeret ha-Kodesh* I), so too darkness is as much representative of God as is light. In the words of the Zohar:

> And God said, "Let us make the human in our image, according to our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). "In our image—this means Light; According to our likeness—this means Darkness, for Darkness is the garment of the Light no less than the body is the garment of the soul." (Gen. I:22b)

Complementing "darkness" is "night," which signifies **Shekhinah**, the lowest sefirah that does not emit its own supernal light, yet is critical to the harmony of the cosmos. Darkness has its own governing angel (*PR* 20:2, 53:2). *SEE* CHAOS; MIDNIGHT; NIGHT; SEFIROT; TWILIGHT.

David ben Jesse, King: Warrior-poet and Israel's archetypal king. While the biblical accounts of King David are decidedly naturalistic and almost completely (with the exception of his encounter with an **Angel** described in 1 Chronicles) bereft of supernatural events, many legends of the fantastic are told about David's life in other Jewish literature.

According to **Midrash**, when **Adam** was shown the generations that would descend from him, God revealed to him that David was destined to die shortly after **birth**. Adam was so saddened to see this great **Soul** cut short that he gave up seventy years of his own life span for the future king of Israel (Gen. 5:5; PdRE 19).

Like **Samson**, David was exceedingly strong, and slew many wild beasts with his bare hands (*Mid. Sam.* 20). His extraordinary musical gifts were Orpheus-like, and he possessed a magical harp that played by itself (B.B. 3b–4a).

During his battle with the giant **Goliath**, he performed several **miracles**. The five stones he selected actually came to him of their own accord. When he touched them, they merged into a single wondrous and deadly missile. During their face-off, David cast the **evil eye** on Goliath, paralyzing him. After Goliath fell, an **Angel** helped David in delivering the coup de grâce, as the shepherd was too small to lift the giant's weapon by himself.[1]

He encountered other fantastic beasts during his life, including the brothers of Goliath, a giant re'em, and talking **animals**. When he was elevated to kingship by **Samuel**, the **oil** of his anointing turned to **gemstones** as it dripped from his head (Mid. Teh. 22:22, 34:1; Sot., 42b; Lev. R. 10:7, 21:2; Ruth R. 4:1; Tanh. Emor 4; Mid. Sam. 20:106–8; Zohar III:272b).

David had an ongoing spiritual association with stones. Later, he would uncover the even ha-sheyitah, the Foundation Stone of the cosmos, and on that stone his son **Solomon** would build the **Temple**. There are several legends revolving around David and the foundation stone.

Numerous **miracles** are recorded in rabbinic literature surrounding his military campaigns. His death, which was foretold to him, had to be carefully contrived by the **Angel of Death** in order to outwit him. According to one legend, David studied **Torah** continuously and Death had to create a distraction before he could seize David's soul (Shab. 30a–b). Another claimed David actually fled to the mystic city of **Luz**, where the power of Death did not extend, and the Angel had to trick David into leaving the sanctuary of the city. In a unique legend, he never actually left the city, and lives on there to this day, like King Arthur in Avalon. This is at odds with the bulk of tradition, which records his death in detail. At his

funeral, his son Solomon summoned eagles to gather and use their wings to shield his **Body** from the **sun** (Ruth R. 3:2).

On the Day of Judgment, he will arise from the grave and once again sing his **psalms**, which will be heard from one end of the universe to the other. Those sinners in **Gehenna** who respond "Amen" to his words will be redeemed instantly (Ruth R. 1:17; PdRE 19; Mid. Teh. 92:10; Num. R. 14:12).

David's eventual restoration to kingly power over Israel is symbolized by the moon—though it wanes, it waxes once again (RaSHI's comment on Ps. 89:38; R.H. 25a; *Zohar* I:192a). David is destined to be the biological **ancestor** of the **Messiah**. In later Kabbalistic circles, it became accepted that the Messiah will in fact be David reincarnated. This belief is derived from the Talmudic phrase (now a popular song) *David Melech Yisrael* ("David, King of Israel"), which includes the refrain, *Chai, chai, v'kiyyam* ("[he] lives, lives, and endures"). In the system of the **sefirot**, David represents **Malchut** , the tenth sefirah.

1. L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia, PA: JPS, 1968), 537–38.

Day: In the **Zohar**, "days" is a Kabbalistic term for the "lower" seven **sefirot**.

Day of Judgment: *SEE* JUDGMENT, DAY OF.

Day of the Lord: *SEE* JUDGMENT, DAY OF.

Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS): An ancient library of scrolls found in various **Caves** between 1947 and 1964 around the ruins of **Qumran** in the area of the Dead Sea. The collection was hidden away by an unknown collective of Jews, probably sectarian **priests** who had been driven from power in the **Temple**, possibly the group known as the Essences, in the centuries before the destruction of **Jerusalem** in 70 CE.

The collection consists of both biblical and non-biblical documents. The DSS are far and away the biggest and most ancient collection of Jewish documents in existence, and their importance is hard to overestimate.[1] The documents are now largely translated, after many decades of delay, and each document is usually known by a number-letter designation, based on the cave in which the text was found. For example, 4Q561 means [Cave] 4, Q[umran, document number] 561. Larger finds were occasionally given names by their translators, such as the Community rule, the Damascus Document, or the **War Scroll**. Some smaller, damaged fragments still need to be matched up, read, and interpreted.

Many of the non-biblical works in the DSS reveal aspects of ancient Jewish spirituality previously unknown to the world. The documents also contain myths,

traditions, practices, and other information that gives us new perspective on the Hebrew Scriptures we have today, and even add background to the ideas found in the Christian Scriptures, though there were no actual Christian texts found among the DSS. Because of this potential to create controversy over the history of Judaism and, especially, the origins of **Christianity**, the fact that the documents largely remained in the exclusive control of a small circle of scholars for the first forty years spawned multiple conspiracy theories and rumors of the shocking revelations they contained. Since their full publication in the 1990s, many of the grander paranoid theories have evaporated, but the DSS still contain many things of interest to the student of the esoteric.

Among the non-biblical texts, there is a particular affinity for stories of **Enoch**, a human who ascends into **heaven** to become an **Angel** and, conversely, for the fallen **Angel** traditions of divine beings that come down to corrupt humanity, suggesting the authors championed a kind of dualistic angel **mysticism**.[2] There is also a pronounced number mysticism revolving around groups of fours and sevens. The authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls were advocates for a solar **calendar** they believed was given to humanity by the angels, and opposed the lunar-based calendar being used by the rest of the Jewish community.[3]

Besides the documents of priestly spirituality and mysticism, among the texts in the DSS collection there exist several magical books—books of spells (4Q510, 4Q511, 11Q11), **divination** (4Q561), and **astrology** (4Q318). For example, 4Q560 is a fragmentary text of magical adjurations against injurious spirits. 4QCryptic, also known as 4Q1861, is a fragmentary work of physiognomy (divining based on a person's physical features).[4] Angelologies and demonologies are present in many documents, along with several elaborate accounts of the eschatological battles to be expected at the end of time. *SEE* BRONTOLOGY ; HOROSCOPE ; APOCRYPHA.

1. Schiffman and VanderKam, *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol. 1, vii–x.

2. Ibid., 249–52.

3. Ibid., 108–16.

4. Ibid., vol. 2, 502–4.

Death: (מות/*Mavet*). Death entered existence through the **sin** of the first humans, who by their disobedience lost access to the **Tree of Life** (Gen. 3). Initially, people lived for many hundreds of years each, but God shortened the life span because of the long-term human inclination to devolve into violence (Gen. 6).

According to the **Talmud**, there are 903 ways to die (Ber. 8a). The **Bible** speaks repeatedly of **karet**, being "cut off," a heavenly punishment, and *al pei*

Elohim ("death by the **kiss** of God"). Sudden death is a sign of divine displeasure, as is death before age fifty.

The Sages do not consider child deaths in the same way (Shab. 32b). No righteous person dies until another is born.

Omens of death include the barking of and the appearance of owls, ominous **dreams**, and seeing human that lack the head. The dying can see **Adam**, the **Angel of Death**, and/or the **Shekhinah**. If a man dies smiling, or with his face uplifted, it is a good omen that he will have ease in the afterlife, as is dying while facing people, on the eve of the **Sabbath**, or at the conclusion of **Yom Kippur**. If a person dies **weeping** or with the face downcast, it is a bad omen. Likewise, if one dies with the face turned away from people, at the end of the Sabbath, or on the eve of Yom Kippur, it is a bad sign. **rain** at the time of death and/or **burial** is a sign of divine pleasure, and it is a good omen for the deceased (Hor. 12a; *SCh* 1516).



The Execution of Haman *by E. M. Lilien*

Some who are dying achieve a capacity for clairvoyance or **Prophecy** (Gen. 49, 50:24; Deut. 31:28–29; *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs; Testament of Job*).

The **Soul** of the dead escapes through the **mouth** and at that moment its voice can be heard from one end of the universe to the other (Gen. R. 6:7). The windows in the place where a corpse rests should be opened to allow the spirit to

move freely. Based on Job 14:22, the Rabbis teach that the soul remains conscious, some say until the interment, while others claim the dead can hear the living until the final decomposition of the **Body** (Shab. 152b). Some teach that the disoriented soul hovers about the body for three days (others claimed seven) seeking to reenter it (Lev. R. 18:1; PdRE 34). According to the **Zohar**, the soul of the newly dead wanders between its earthly residence and its grave (I: 226b).

Since the souls of the dead stay close to their bodies until their transition to **Eden**, ghosts are mostly limited to the confines of the **cemetery** (Shab. 152b). The soul's separation from the body is a painful one, a process called chibbut ha-kever, "the torment of the grave." One Sage asserts that worms feel like needles to the dead (Ber. 18b). This tradition is based on the belief that the grave itself is atonement for the sins committed in life (Ket. 111a).

Kabbalists who taught the doctrine of **reincarnation** believed that the souls of the dead, or at least parts of a soul, transmigrate from one living body to another, and the souls of the disturbed dead can possess the body of a living being. The souls of the **Righteous** can be temporarily recalled to this world to help the living (*Kav v'Yasher; Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*).

Despite the belief in moral accountability through death, because Jews have not been burdened with the fear of "eternal damnation," Jewish teachings have generally viewed death with great equanimity. The Kotzker Rebbe compared death to "moving from one home to another." A. J. Heschel spoke of it as a "homecoming." *SEE* BURIAL; DYBBUK; ETERNAL LIFE; GHOST; IBBUR; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY; WORLD TO COME.

Decrees, Divine: In the imagination of the Sages, God's decisions resemble royal decrees. Each decree written on high is sealed. A decree may be nullified by repentance, **Prayer**, and **charity** (R.H. 16b). The piety of the **Righteous** is so great that they have the individual power to reverse a divine decision (Suk. 42a). Thus, playing on the epithet for **Moses**, *Ish Elohim* (which can mean "Man of God" or "Husband of God"), Midrash psalms notes that Moses could nullify God's decrees, just as a husband can nullify his wife's vows (90:5).

If God's decision is sealed, however, then the matter is fated, and humans cannot change its outcome (*Eleh Ezkarah*). If the righteous pit themselves against a fated decree, it can place the very existence of the world in jeopardy, so in all such cases the pious have chosen to accept the divine **judgment** rather than uproot the world (R.H. 16b; High Holiday *Machzor; Aggadat Esther; Midrash Eleh Ezkarah*). *SEE* JUDGMENT, DAY OF; ROSH HASHANAH.

De Falk, Samuel: *SEE* FALK, CHAYYIM SAMUEL JACOB.

Demiurge: "Craftsman." The evil creator god of Gnostic **myth**. Derived from the philosophy of Plato, the Gnostics reimagine him as a malevolent force that imprisons spirit in the material world. Some Gnostic thinkers (Valentinus, Maricon) claim the demiurge is none other than the God of the Hebrew Scriptures.[1] *SEE* GNOSTICS AND GNOSTICISM, ANCIENT.

1. Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis*, 115–116, 125.

Demons: (שד/*Sheid,* also *Mazzik; Ruach Ha-ra; Se'ir; Malach Mashchit*). Demons are spirits that act malevolently against human beings, usually in the form of **disease**, illness, confusion, or misfortune. Judaism has not produced one uniform attitude toward the demonic, its origins, nature, or functions. Jews do have traditions of demonic creatures which are ontologically distinct from humanity (Such as Samael, Asmodeus, and **Lilith**), yet an equally large body of Jewish thought regards these same evil spirits to be malevolent byproducts of humanity: incomplete human **Souls**, the malevolent dead, or spirits spawned by human action. While there are a few pre-existent spirits, demons are usually understood to be spiritual byproducts of human criminal and immoral sexual activity. Moreover, it is not until the Middle Ages and the rise of classical **Kabbalah** in the 13th century, that one can read of demons that fit the Christian mold of hell-spawn that threaten the very fabric of the cosmos; the majority of sources from antiquity view shedim, mazzakim, and kesilim as other traditional cultures have imagined djinns, sprites, and elves—cruel, mischievous spirits who afflict humanity with miseries, both great and small.

While the Hebrew **Bible** devotes remarkably little attention to demonology, it does make mention of evil spirits (Lev. 16:10; 1 Sam. 16:14–16; Isa. 13:21, 34:14), including satyrs and night demons, but does not provide a great deal of detail. In fact, the **language** of the Bible is so ambiguous, it is often difficult to discern whether the author is referring to a named demon, or poetically reifying an abstract concept, such as **Death**, plague, or pestilence (Jer. 9:20; Hab. 3:5; Ps. 91:6).

Clear-cut and more elaborate stories about demons appear during the Greco-Roman period. The Gospels, which provide us with a comparatively detailed picture of Jewish life in 1st-century Palestine, record several accounts of confrontations between **Jesus** and demonically possessed people (Mark 5). Select demons—Belial and Masteman—are mentioned repeatedly in the **Dead**

Sea Scrolls. Josephus also includes some reflections on the subject (*War* 7; *Ant.* 8:2, 8:5).

The existence of demons, while widely accepted, has always presented a theological difficulty for Jews. Since all things are ultimately the creation of the one God, the question of why evil spirits should exist at all has greatly exercised Jewish thought. Drawing upon the cryptic passage about the "sons of God" found in Genesis 6:1–4, **apocalyptic literature** offers the first attempt to explain their existence in a monotheistic context by claiming demons are really **fallen angel**, or the offspring of the union between humans and fallen angels.[1] This explanation introduces an enduring strand of thought, recurrent throughout Jewish literature, that demons are actually somehow, at least in part, the byproducts of human beings.

Rabbinic literature, particularly the **Talmud**, provides the most extensive source for Jewish demonology, though the information is scattered through many sources, and throughout those sources several explanations for the existence of demons are offered (Pes. 111a–111b; Ber. 5a, 60b; Git. 70a; Shab. 151b; Suk. 28a; Eruv. 100b; B.B. 73a).

The Talmud begins by asserting that they are a creation of the twilight of the sixth day (M. Avot 5.6). The suggestion is that these spirits are partly formed souls, unfinished beings left over from God's creative process. The Talmudic sources do not specify whether demons are an independent creation, or whether they first appear as a result of the **sin** of **Adam** and **Eve**, which in some traditions also happened at twilight of the sixth day. Whatever the case, they are tied to humanity, for they cannot procreate on their own; they used **semen** from Adam in order to make more of their own kind (Eruv. 18b). A celebrated elaboration on this tradition is that of **Lilith**, the first woman, having transformed herself into a witch-demon using the **Tetragrammaton**, takes the nocturnal emissions of men she seduces to procreate demons (AbbS). **Eve** was also seduced by incubi, producing a line of malevolent offspring, beginning with **Cain** (PdRE 21; *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* 4:1).

Midrash Tanchuma picks up further develops a talmudic theme on demon origins, declaring them to be souls without bodies, creations that were as yet unfinished when the day of rest commenced (Bereshit 17). Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer (34), by contrast, teaches that demons are the disembodied souls of those who died in **the Flood** (also see Yalkut Isa. 429). Another strand of tradition asserts that the sins of a person are inscribed on their bones, and when they die, demons are a kind of postmortem metaphysical emission, like the release of the

soul (*SCh* 770, 1170; *Kitzur Shelah)*. The **Zohar** likewise claims that some demons are the souls of the wicked dead (I: 28b–29a, 48a; II: 70a; III: 25a), perhaps setting the stage for the later development of the dybbuk tradition.

One anonymous medieval rationalist even attempted a more naturalistic interpretation of demons, describing them as a noxious product of the interaction of sunlight with smoke and vapor that then clings to the **Body**, causing illness (*Sefer ha-Atzamim*). Menachem ben Israel also argues for what we would describe today as a "naturalistic" explanation of the demonic.[2]

In classic Kabbalistic thought, the demonic is a necessary part of creation, a product of the Sitra Achra, the "other side" of the divine **emanations** (specifically gevurah) in the material universe. Medieval mystics who accept that evil spirits are an intentional feature of the divine order often characterize demons as "destructive" or "punishing angels," a way of emphasizing that demons, too, are part of God's **Creation** and subject to the divine will. Mystics also clarify and elaborate on the Talmudic position that demons are the byproduct of human sin; Samael and Lilith are spawned by the existence of Adam and Eve (*Treatise of the Left Emanation*).

With regards to their nature, demons occupy an intermediate place between mortals and angels:

> Six things have been said about demons … In three ways they are equal to the ministering angels: They have wings as do the ministering angels, they fly from one end of the world to the other as do the ministering angels, and they hear the future as it is foretold beyond the supernal curtain as do the ministering angels. In three ways they are equal to men: they eat and drink as do men, they sexually reproduce as do men, and they die as do men. (Chag. 16a)

They are invisible, except under special conditions.

Tractate Berachot has perhaps the most information on demons of any part of the **Talmud**. There we learn that demons are pervasive:

> It has been taught: Abba Benjamin says, if the eye had the power to see them, no creature could endure the demons. Abaye says: They are more numerous than we are and they surround us like the ridge round a field. R. Huna says: Every one among us has a thousand on his left hand and ten thousand on his right hand. (Ber. 6a)

Demons tend to congregate most often, and people are most vulnerable to them, in the **wilderness**, in ruins, and in other places not normally frequented by

people (Isa. 13:21). It also describes a "diagnostic" **ritual** for detecting the presence of the demonic: **ashes** spread around one's bed at nighttime will reveal demon tracks in the morning, and demons can be rendered visible by grinding up the ashes of a black cat's afterbirth and then sprinkling the powder in one's eyes (Ber. 6a).

While the **amulet** and magical traditions of antiquity assume that there are many varieties of evil spirits, RaSHI is one of the earliest writers to try and formally classify demons, distinguishing between *Ruchin*, *Mazzikim*, and Lilin. The German Pietist Judah he-Chasid taught that at least some demons actually **study** Torah and adhere to Jewish **law**. Based on this understanding, demonic attacks can occur only when the victim has transgressed in some way (*Sefer Or Zarua*). It is interesting to note how much Judah's teaching parallels medieval Islamic ideas about the spiritual life of djinns.

The malevolent effects of demons are many: they cause illness and death, especially for the vulnerable (children, **women** in childbirth), they trouble and deceive the mind, and they cause contention in the community of mortals.

The appearance of demons varies, but is always terrible. In keeping with ancient Near Eastern beliefs about evil spirits, and contrary to the Christian notion of being hooved, demons are usually portrayed as having bird talons for feet in addition to wings. At night, demons can appear in human form (Meg. 3a).

Demonic power waxes and wanes according to the time of day, the week, the seasons, meteorological conditions, topographical features, and other natural factors (*Yalkut Chadash*, Keshafim 56; Num. R. 12:3; Pes. 3a–b,112a; Shab. 67a). The informed person can use this information to minimize the threat of this power.

Around human habitations, they frequent rooftops, outhouses, and drainage gutters. Strangely, demons are attracted to **synagogues**. The **Angel of Death**, for example, is said to keep his tools there. There are even stories of Sages doing night battles with demons in the synagogue (Shab. 66b).

Prominent demons have names, usually derived from their particular power. *Reshef*, for example, means "pestilence." Some demons, like Samael, have theonymic names like angels. Occasionally demons can have surprisingly mundane names, like "Joseph." The name Lilith means either "air" (Akkadian) or "night" (Hebrew) and has its roots in Mesopotamian aerial spirits called "lilu."



Image of rabbi battling demons by Alfred Feinberg

There are numerous strategies to stop the predations of demons. Reciting certain **psalms** repels evil spirits (Pss. 29, 91, 121), as do other key verses of Scripture (Num. 7:4–6). Magical phrases and **incantations** have also been recorded that can combat their malevolent effects, such as these examples:

> Thou were closed up; closed up were you. Cursed, broken, and destroyed be Bar Tit, Bar Tame, Bar Tina as Shamgaz, Mezigaz, and Istamai [these are, alternately names of demons and protective angels]. For a demon of the privy one should say: "On the head of a lion and on the snout of a lioness there is the demon Bar Shirika Panda; at a garden-bed of leeks I hurled him down, [and] with the jawbone of an ass I smote him." (Shab. 67a; also see Pes. 100a; 112a)

The bells on the skirt of the High **priest** evidently drove them away. Drinking **water** only from white containers turns away night demons (Pes. 3a). **mezuzah**, **tefillin**, and ritual fringes are credited with the power to ward off evil spirits (Ber. 5b). The Jews of Mesopotamia additionally protected their homes with **incantation bowls**. Temporary protection can be obtained through the use of **magic circles**. **amulets** of nearly infinite variety have been created across Jewish

history to combat demonic assault. Demons can be bribed with **food** or money (PdRE 46; T. Shab. 7:16; Ber. 50b) or frightened off with shofar blasts, unpleasant smells, or spitting. There is also the gesture commonly known as "the fig":

> If a person forgot [to bring suitable protection] and went out [only to come under attack], what should he do? He should clasp his right thumb in the fingers of his left hand, and vice-versa, and say, "I and my fingers are three." If he hears a voice say "You and I are four," he should respond "You and I are five" and so on, until the demon gets angry and leaves. (Pes.110a)

guardian angels are the best defense, and are acquired every time one performs a mitzvah (Ex. R. 32).

Intriguingly, there is a strand of tradition that holds a mortal can work constructively with demons, if one knows the proper rituals of power to control them. This idea premised on the implications of absolute monotheism—all things are created by God purposefully. This belief that man can direct demonic energy to beneficent purposes is first articulated in stories about Solomon controlling demons (*Testament of Solomon*). One Sage in the Talmud permits demon summoning, provided one does not violate Torah in either the manner of the summoning or what is asked of the spirit (Sanh. 101a). Eliezer of Metz (ca. 12th century) permitted the use of imps in spells and amulet writing: "Invoking the demons to do one's will is permitted … for what difference is there between invoking demons and angels?" Demons can be turned against other demons (Lev. R. 24). Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague permitted communication with demons, but solely for the purpose of **divination** (*B'er ha-Golah* 2).

Sometimes the demon will help a human willingly, which is taken as evidence that even demons serve God, however inscrutably (Pes. 106a), but usually spirits must be controlled magically, captured, and coerced to do the will of the adept. By the same token, anything that smacks of demon veneration or worship, such as making offerings or burning **incense** to a demon, is expressly forbidden (Sanh. 65b). *SEE* LAW AND THE PARANORMAL.

1. G. Nickelsburg, "The Experience of Demons (and Angels) in 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and the Book of Tobit," *Minutes of the 1988 Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins*, http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/psco/year25/8803a.shtml, 1–20.

2. J. Dan, "The Concept of Evil and Demonology in Rabbi Mannaseh ben Israel's Nishmat Hayyim" (Hebrew), *Dov Noy Jubilee Volume* (1983): 263–74.

Demon Queens: *SEE* LILITH; IGRAT; MALKAT; NAAMAN.

Depository: (מכון/*Machon*). One of the seven **heavens**, it is the level that warehouses all celestial precipitations: **rain**, snow, **hail**, **dew**, as well as the **winds**, storms, and vapors (Chag. 12b–13a).

Destiny: *SEE* FATE.

Devekut: (דבקות). "Clinging/Cleaving." The experience of mystical communion or union with God, usually as an outcome of meditative **Prayer** or spiritual exercises. The term originally expressed a more mundane notion of binding one's self to God through good deeds and meticulous **ritual** practice:

> For if you shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways and to cleave unto Him … (Deut. 11:22)

This sense of the term is widely used in the **Talmud** (Ket. 111b; Tanh. Matot 1; Num. R. 22:11), but it could also refer to the desire to draw close to God (Sanh. 64a, 65b; *Sifrei,* Shoftim 173; Gen. R. 80:7).

The term is now most intimately associated with various kinds of mystical ecstatic practices. This esoteric development of the term may reflect the sometimes "erotic" aspect of the mystical experience. The first use of the word, after all, appears in Genesis, in association with the union of man and woman: a man … shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Gen. 2:24).

Isaac the Blind is one of the earliest mystics to make extensive use of the term, mostly in the context of achieving fullest possible communion with God by focusing on the **sefirot** during prayer.[1] Moses Cordovero described a magical-theurgic dimension to devekut, in that the act of "clinging to God" can be used to influence the direction of divine forces in the higher worlds (*Pardes Rimmonim* 75d). **Chayyim Vital** and **Chasidism** sometimes use it as term for beneficent spiritual **possession** [2] as exemplified by this passage:

> And how is this mystery of cleaving performed? Let a righteous person stretch out on the grave of one of the *Tanna'im*, or one of the prophets, and cleave with his lower soul to that of the tsaddiq, and with his spirit to his spirit. Then the Tanna begins to speak with him as a person talks to a friend—and answers all that he ask, revealing to him all the mysteries of the Torah.[3]

In Chasidism, the term is used to refer to a general attitude, often linked to cultivating the emotions of **love** and fear, of keeping one's attention constantly focused toward God. In this way, devekut can be achieved while at prayer, studying, performing daily mitzvot. **Chasidism** both affirms the need for

everyone to pursue devekut and the need to be engaged with the world by teaching that the ordinary tasks of living are, with the right intention, the stepping stones to greater attachment with God.[4] This is because, throughout most of its history, the term has not been used in a way akin to monastic **mysticism** or any other kind of denial of worldly life. Jewish mystics both affirm the need for everyone to pursue devekut and the need to be engaged with the world by teaching that the ordinary tasks of living are, with the right intention, the stepping stones to greater attachment with God (*Or ha-Ganuz L'Tsaddikim,* 73). However, this sense of a worldly devekut breaks down in some mystical systems, where it is explicitly described in terms of "separating" oneself from the material world (*Reshit Chochmah* 4:23; *Sha'ar ha-Kedushah* 4:21).

1. G. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah,* translated by A. Arkush (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1987), 300–301.

2. Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judaism,* 257–304.

3. L. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and his Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 283.

4. Wolfson, *Along the Path,* 89–90.

Devekut B'otiyot: (דבקות באתיות). "Cleaving to the Letters." A mystical **Prayer** technique taught in early **Chasidism**. It involves carefully and fervently articulating each syllable of the words of prayer. The effect is to create a mantra like chant with little or no interruption in sound.

Dever: (דבר). "Pestilence." The **demon** of **plagues** (Hab. 3:5; Ps. 91:5–6). Some **Bible** commentators regard the ten plagues described in Exodus to each be a demon unleashed by God, Dever being one of them.

Devir: (דביר). The innermost compartment of the **Temple**, the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 6:5, 8:6). According to the **priests** of **Qumran**, there are seven heavenly *devirim* that correspond to the one earthly one (*Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice*). *SEE* HOLY OF HOLIES; SEVEN HEAVENS.

Dew: (טל/*Tal*). Dew is more than mere precipitation in Jewish tradition, it is a symbol and a metaphor for divine emanation (*Shir ha-Kavod;* Zohar I:88a).

There are dews of beneficence and dews of destruction stored in Machon, the sixth level of **heaven**. In the seventh heaven, Aravot, there resides the very special *tal shel techiyah,* the "dew of resurrection," which will revive the dead on the Day of Judgment (Chag. 12b; Shab. 88b; J. Ber. 5:2; PdRE 34). God has had to deploy this dew once already, at **Mount Sinai**, when the whole people **Israel** died of fright from hearing God speak (*S of S R.; Targum S of S*).

Though it seems understood in most texts that dew is a precipitation from the sky, in some Jewish teachings, dew is part of the underworld waters—it rises from the **Earth** (Gen. 2:6). As such, it is the "feminine" waters, the counterpart to the "masculine" rainfall. Only when the two waters combine can the earth truly fructify. In the **Zohar**, dew signifies all manner of divine **emanations** from on high, including **manna**, which is a kind of dew (I: 95b; II: 61b).

Deyokan or Deyokna: (ˆqwyd). "Form/Template/Portrait." The ideal form of a person. This elusive term refers to an image, seemingly shared simultaneous by God and a person.[1] It is philosophically related to the Platonic notion of "forms," of idealized templates of all existent things that dwell on high simultaneously with the realized object in the lower world. As the **Zohar** puts it, it is the "Likeness that includes all likenesses." RaSHI uses the term, commenting on Genesis 1:27:

> God as Judge, alone without the angels, created the human being … In a mold which was a *tzelem deyokan* of God, God created the human being, one being both male and female and which was subsequently divided into two beings, God created them.

In Zohar, it is described as something that is bonded to the **Body** at birth. It appears to a couple in sexual union and, if the relationship worthy, imprints upon the seed of the child generated by that union (III:104b). Though invisible, the righteous can interact with their deyokna, even see through its "eyes," which gives the person the special sight of **Prophecy**. There are a number of cognate notions of an ethereal body or spiritual membrane that accompanies the material body which also appears in **Kabbalah**: Guf ha-Dak ("The sheer body") and/or the Tzelem ("image") (Zohar I:7a, Zohar I:224a–b; *Miflaot Elohim* 48:6; *Nishmat Chayyim* 1:13). It is unclear to what degree these terms are synonyms or describe discreet phenomena.

1. G. Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (New York: Schocken, 1991), 251–270.

Din: (דין)."Judgment." The divine attribute of strict justice. In rabbinic teachings, God's attribute of *Din* is associated with the divine name Elohim. In biblical stories that refer to God by that name, the power of severe justice is most present in the world during those episodes. It is from the attribute of Din that the rigorous, harsh, and even demonic aspects of the world emanate.

In **Kabbalah**, Din is synonymous with the sefirah of Gevurah. It is personified by the angel **Gabriel**. *SEE* SEFIROT.

Dina: (דינה). "Law/Religion." Another name for the **Angel** of the **Torah**. *SEE* YEFEIYAH; YOFIEL.

Directions: Each of the cardinal compass points is overseen by a princely **Angel**: **Michael** (south), **Gabriel** (north), **Uriel** (east), and **Raphael** (west). East is the source of light, north of darkness, west the snow and **hail**, and south the rains and **dew**. (Num. R. 2:10; Zohar I:149b). God assembled **Adam** from **Earth** taken from the four corners of the world (Tanh. Pekudei 3). As early as Sefer Yetzirah, mystical texts begin to talk of *vav kitzvot*, "six directions—north, south, eat, west, up, and down, which often function in subsequent Jewish literature as a merism for "totality" or "everything." Elijah Gaon equates these with six sefirotic qualities: **love**, power, beauty, endurance, glory, and foundations, as well as the six days of creative process (*Biur ha-Gra Sefer Yetzirah* 1:5). Zer Anpin bears the divine quality of this dimensionality. In the **ritual** of waving the lulav on the holiday of Sukkot, the lulav and etrog are held together in the hands waved to the six directions, to draw waters to the Land of **Israel** from every point. *SEE* EAST; NORTH; SOUTH; WEST.

Disease: The prevalent attitude found in the Hebrew **Bible** is that disease, like all other things, comes from the will of God. Some passages in the **Torah** also show God using disease as a retribution for **sin**. At the same time, God also declares "I am the one that heals you" (Ex. 15:26). Though this aspect of the Bible could have led Jews to believe, like Christian Scientists, that human intervention in disease is a violation of God's will, that is not how Judaism has dealt with the issue. The Sages, for example, blame some disease on demonic forces and therefore permit the use of virtually any remedy, whether natural or supernatural. Today, virtually all Jews accept scientific theories of natural pathology. It is promised that in Messianic times, all disease will be curable with the "living waters" that will flow from **Jerusalem** (Zech. 13– 14). *SEE* DEMONS; HEALING.

Divination: (סמנות/*Simanut*, also *Nichush; Kesem; K'shafim*). "Who is wise? He who foresees the results of his deeds" (Tam. 32a). Across human cultures, it has been widely believed that the gods and spirits close to them (the dead, for example) have privileged knowledge of what will unfold in the mortal realms. The ability to gain such supernatural insight has been prized by humans since (and probably before) the dawn of written history. All divination can be divided into the quest for one of two kinds of knowledge: knowledge of the future (manticism) and knowledge of present, but hidden, events (clairvoyance).

Jews are no exception in their desire for this knowledge, and throughout history many Jews have accepted the reality of divinatory events and experiences. Moreover, Jews have been practitioners of many different diviner's arts across time and geography. Starting with the testimony of the Hebrew Scripture, however, Judaism has manifested an ambivalent attitude toward divination and from earliest times Jews have struggled to distinguish between licit and illicit forms of divination.

The generic biblical words for divination are *kesem* and *nahash*. In the ancient Near East, three types of divinatory practices are documented: serendipitous **omens**, impetrated omens, and mediumistic divination. The first consists of the reading and interpretation of omens and prodigies in naturally occurring phenomenon, such as the **weather**, abnormal births, or astral signs. The second practice consists of asking questions by means of divinatory devices, such as casting **lots** or reading entrails, and the third involves the consulting of human oracles or divine forces channeled through a person, such as **Prophecy**.

Within these general rubrics, the books of the Hebrew Scriptures make reference to myriad forms of mantic practices, both licit and illicit. Among the accepted means of divination are prophets and seers of YHVH (Deut. 18:14–22; 1 Sam. 9:6; 2 Kings 3:11), oneiromancy (**dream** interpretation) (Gen. 37:5–9; Dan.), Urim and Thummim, the casting of **lots** (1 Sam. 23:10–12), **music** (2 Kings 3:15), lecanomancy or hydromancy (reading patterns in liquid) (Gen. 44:5), and word omens (1 Sam. 14:9–10).

Illicit methods, condemned by biblical authors, include terafim (consulting idols; Zech. 10:2), hepatoscopy or extispiciomancy (reading animal entrails; Ezek. 21:26), **necromancy** (communing with the dead; 1 Sam. 15:23), belomancy (casting or shooting arrows; Ezek. 21:26), and **astrology** (Isa. 47:13; Jer. 10:2). At times, the biblical witnesses are not always in agreement about what constitutes legitimate mantic practice. Thus, for example, despite the cases of exemplary practitioners like **Joseph** and Daniel, the prophet **Zechariah** condemns oneiromancy along with other forms of divination (10:2). 2 Kings 13:15–19 recounts a case of what appears to be prophetically endorsed belomancy.

Clairvoyant divination (revealing a hidden current reality) is less common, though veridical dreams are acknowledged as a way for mortals to understand God's will (Gen. 20:3; 1 Sam. 3:3–10; 1 Kings, 3:5–15). Other acceptable forms of clairvoyance include the casting of lots to determine who enjoys God's favor (1 Sam. 10:20– 24) and conferring with a seer to find a lost possession (1 Sam.

9:6), though the evidence is more ambiguous here. Given their narrative context, careful readers must decide whether we are meant to regard these two practices as efficacious, or merely ruses by the prophet to further God's inscrutable purpose.

Many types of diviners are mentioned in Scripture. Under the general category of oracular prophets, there is the *navi* (prophet), the *roeh* (seer), and the *ish Elohim* (man of God). There are also several terms for mantics separate from the Israelite institution of prophecy, all of them being targets of condemnation: Baal Ov, itztzim, kosem kesamim, menachesh, meonen, and yeddioni. The exact meaning of these terms is tentative, as the usage and meaning may well have changed within the time frame of the thousand years over which the **Bible** was composed. And, as in English, some terms may not even reflect technical distinctions, but are merely synonyms, often borrowed from other languages.

The Talmudic Sages were extremely sensitive to serendipitous omens, and were avid observers of the stars, the **trees** (Suk. 28a), and the behavior of **birds** (Git. 45a) and other selected animals. Biblical verses elicited from **children** can be read as signs. All the same, the Rabbis condemned those forms of operational divination they associated with *kesem/nahash* (**sorcery**/**witchcraft**). An extended discussion of witchcraft and divination appears in Sanhedrin 65b. In that passage, "performance" or impetration, such as the use of divining rods, is the primary criteria for determining that a form of manticism is illicit. The Sages are not consistent on these points, and the line between licit and illicit forms of divination is often blurred beyond useful distinction.

The medieval Sefer Chasidim continues with this ambivalence, condemning forms of impetrated divination while recording dreams and omens and teaching their interpretation (237, 441, 729, 1172). In his book *Chochmat ha-Nefesh*, Eleazar of Worms lists a variety of bodily omens and their meaning. **Chayyim Vital** consults witches, sorcerers, and visionaries in dizzy variety in his quest to confirm through paranormal means his own spiritual genius (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot*). The dead continue to be regarded as an excellent source of mantic knowledge, even though necromancy is roundly condemned. Here the distinction seems to be that when the dead initiate the communication, it is acceptable, but if the living attempt to initiate a séance, it is not (this too changes under the influence of Spanish **Kabbalah**).[1] **astrology**, lamps, cocks, Bibliomancy, and **mirrors** were all acceptable sources of advanced knowledge by the Middle Ages. Though condemned by the **Talmud**, the use of divining rods was also tolerated by the late Middle Ages.

Most specifically, Jewish divination practices have all but vanished from modern communities, though some pietistic groups still practice the custom of scrying the fingernails at Havdalah and/or employ Bibliomancy. Most Jews who are interested in such things today make use of techniques popular in the general culture, such as **horoscopes** and Tarot cards. Jews can still be very attentive to serendipitous omens. *SEE* FINGER; GEOMANCY; MEDIUM; NECROMANCER NECROMANCY; PROPHECY AND PROPHETS.

1. J. H. Chajes, *Between Worlds: Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Modern Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 13–18, 30–31.

Divining Rod: Sticks or staves can be used for purposes of divination (rhabdomancy). It is a very ancient practice. The art of belomancy, the use of arrows for determining a course of action, is an example of rhabdomancy mentioned in the **Bible**. The first mention of a Jew actually using a staff as a divination rod appears in the **Talmud**, where the technique is for a diviner to hold it upright and release it. The direction in which it falls determines the course of action. The Talmud condemns this as **witchcraft**. Nevertheless, divining rods resurface among European Jews amidst the craze for dowsing buried treasure that seized Europe in the High Middle Ages. Jewish magical recipes exist that explain the type of **tree** to be used (usually hazelwood or myrtle), when the rod is to be harvested, and the **incantations** and **rituals** surrounding its use. *SEE* DIVINATION; ROD.

Divri ha-Yamim shel Moshe: “Chronicles of the Life of Moses.” It is a medieval collection of tales about **Moses** that includes many more miraculous details than are found in the biblical accounts.

D’li: (דלי). “Pail/Aquarius.” The **zodiac** sign for the month of Shevat, the late winter month in the Land of Israel. It is a sign of **purification**, wealth, benefit, and the **Torah**. The holiday of Tu B’shevat, the “New Year of Trees,” is celebrated this month, when the winter rains are falling and helping fructify the **Earth**. This reflects the wealth and abundance associated with this sign.

Dog: Like many peoples of the Near East, Jews have historically had an ambivalent attitude toward dogs.[1] The few images of dogs found in the **Bible** are negative. Only the apocryphal book Tobit offers a positive portrayal of a dog.

The book of Deuteronomy specifically prohibits the religious use of the “wages of a dog.” In the past, this obscure **law** has been regarded as an oblique reference to male sacred prostitution. Recent archaeological digs, however, have

uncovered an enormous **healing** cult among the Philistines that involved the sacrifice of dogs. It seems more likely that Deuteronomy is referring to this phenomenon.

Dogs were regarded as highly sensitive to the presence of the spirit world. Thus both the **Talmud** and medieval Jewish literature regard the behaviors of dogs as ominous. Frolicking dogs signify good tidings, and may even signal the presence of **Elijah** in the vicinity. Barking dogs mark the presence of the **Angel of Death**. Witches and **demons** can take on canine form. Dog fur is listed among items to be used for medicinal **amulet**s in the Talmud. In the **Zohar**, "dogs" is a circumlocution for demons (I: 6b). The **Souls** of the wicked are often transmigrated into dogs (*ShB* 108). Many of the later supernatural beliefs about canines appear to come directly from the folk traditions of non-Jewish neighbors (B.K. 60b; *SCh* 1145–46). *SEE* ANIMALS.

1. G. Miller, "Attitudes Toward Dogs in Ancient Israel: A Reassessment," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32.4 (2008): 487–500.

Domah or Dumah: (דומה). "Silence." The angel of the grave. Domah is a punishing angel of the afterlife (Ber. 18b; Shab. 152b; Sanh. 94a). He comes with an angelic court to visit the **Soul** of the dead once the **Body** is interred. At that time, Domah, wielding a flaming scepter, asks the soul its **Hebrew name**, reviews its deeds while living, and pronounces the first judgments upon the dead (PR 23:8). In the **Zohar**, he is one of the principal angels of **Gehenna** (I: 8a–b, 94a, 102a). *SEE* ANGEL OF DEATH ; BURIAL; CHIBBUT HA-KEVER; DEATH; NAME, HEBREW.

Donmeh: A **secret** heretical sect, once scattered across the Ottoman Empire, which arose from the followers of Shabbatai Tzvi.[1] Outwardly maintaining the practice of Islam, the Donmeh cling to many Jewish observances and the belief that Tzvi is the **Messiah**. They continued to expound their own sectarian variety of **Kabbalah**. Once virtually moribund, the group has found renewed life on the Internet as "Neo-Sabbatean Kabbalah."

1. Y. Leibes, *Studies in Jewish Myth and Messianism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 98–101.

Doubles: *SEE* PAIRS.

Dove: (תור/*Tor* or יונה/*Yonah*). The dove, specifically the turtledove, is a symbol of **purity**, peace, the **Messiah** (Yoma 44b; Zohar II:8a–b), the people **Israel** (*Brachot* 53b; *S of S R.* 2:14; *Targum S of S* 1:15, 4:1), and the **Shekhinah** (Chag. 15a; RaSHI comment of Gen. 1:2). According to the Vilna Gaon, the

dove is also a symbol of the **Soul** (Commentary to Jonah 1).

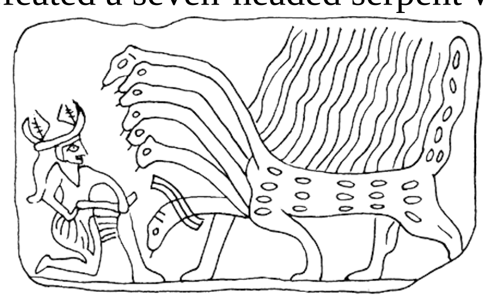
It is a dove that brought an **olive** sprig, a message of hope to **Noah** that he would find refuge on dry land. Thus it becomes a symbol of peace and future redemption. A dove is one of the clean animals that may be offered in sacrifice in the **Temple**. *SEE* DOVE, GOLDEN.



Dove *by E. M. Lilien*

Dove, Golden: Based on the imagery of Psalm 68:14, the **Messiah** becomes identified with a celestial golden dove, which serves as his messenger (Yoma 44b; Zohar III:196b). This same idea appears, in variant form, in the Christian Gospels associated with **Jesus** (Mark 1). *SEE* BIRD'S NEST.

Dragon: (תנין/*Tannin*, also *Teli*). An archetypical monster usually resembling a **serpent**. With only a few vague references in the **Bible**, the term *tannin* is open to various interpretations, the most mundane being the crocodile. More imaginative readers understand it to refer to a monstrous serpent or dragon that dwells in **water** and is a menace to navigation (Neh. 2:13; Isa. 27:1; B.B. 74a–b). At times the word becomes synonymous with **Leviathan**. **Daniel** is credited with battling a dragon and killing it by filling its mouth with pitch (*Bel and the Dragon*). Rabbi Acha defeated a seven-headed serpent with **Prayer** (Kid. 29b).



Ancient Near Eastern illustration>of a multiheaded dragon

In the **apocalyptic literature**, there is a dragon of monstrous dimensions in Sheol that feeds on the **Souls** of the wicked (III *Baruch* 4–5). **demons** can take the form of dragons (Kid. 29b), and some demons, such as **Samael**, are given the title "serpent." In **Kabbalah**, a cosmic blind dragon, Tanin'iver, serves as the

steed of **Lilith**. (Daniel, Septuagint version; III *Baruch; Treatise on the Left Emanation*).

In medieval writings *Teli* becomes another idiom for a dragon, and in some texts it becomes the term for either the constellation of Draco, or the Milky Way, because of the sinuous, elongated appearance of these things (Zohar I:125b).

Drash: (דרש). To "inquire [of God]." *SEE* DIVINATION.

Dream: (חלום/*Chalom*). Clairvoyant and prophetic **dreams** have a long and honored role in Judaism. The **Bible** identifies numerous **Patriarchs**, kings and **prophets** who have dreams of ominous import (Gen. 28:12, 31:10, 37:5–9; Dan. 2; Zech. 1:8). Prophets and dreamers, in fact, are often listed together (1 Sam. 28:6; Deut. 8:2). It also acknowledges certain individuals, such as **Joseph** and **Daniel**, as having a talent for interpreting dreams. The Bible assumes that both dreams and the ability to interpret them come from God.

The Sages of the **Talmud** express diverse attitudes towards the mantic potential of dreams. While there are several examples of Sages who dismiss their ominous value, the overwhelming bulk of the Rabbis take dreams quite seriously. The most popular notion (Ber. 57b) seems to be that dreams are "one-sixtieth of **Prophecy**." Even when God "turns his face" from Israel, She still speaks in dreams to individuals (Chag. 5b). Dreams are also considered "one-sixtieth of death," and it is interesting to note that both prophecy and **Death** are phenomena that the Sages believe give a person access to the divine mind.

By the same token, the Sages note that "Neither a good dream nor a bad dream is completely fulfilled" (Ber. 55a, 57b). There is a perpetual suspicion that dreams have mixed sources, and therefore mixed reliability—good dreams come from the agency of **Angels**, while false dreams are the work of **demons** (Ber. 55b; Zohar I:183a).

There is considerable rabbinic material concerning the meaning of dreams, including the stories of individual Sages and a short list of dream symbols and their meanings (Ber. 56b–57b). The Talmud even mentions a professional dream specialist, the Baal ha-Chalom, who is necessary because interpreting one's own dreams is discouraged (Yoma 28b). There is also an angel in Jewish tradition called Baal ha-Chalom. There are multiple stories in rabbinic literature of the dead returning to address the living in their dreams. An unsolicited dream **vision** of the dead apparently does not violate the prohibition against necromancy, and such visions are generally treated as a valid source of occult knowledge (*SCh* 237, 705, 708–10, 729, 1129).

The **Zohar** is cautious about the value of dreams, seeing them as an admixture of prophecy and the dark forces of the Sitra Achra:

> What is the difference between prophecy and dream? Prophecy derives from the [trustworthy] world of the male, dream from the [ambiguous] world of female. (I: 149a; also see I: 183a)

A major interest of Jewish mystical/magical literature is how to induce revelatory dreams. Various **Hechalot** texts include **incubation** practices for receiving dream revelations. Sefer ha-Razim has an entire section devoted to dreams and getting dream questions answered; doing so involves a period of **ritual purification**, going to a body of **water** , burning **incense**, and performing an incantation to the Sar ha-Chalom, the angel of dreams. After three **nights**, the angel will appear and answer questions.

Medieval works, such as Sefer Chasidim and fragments of the Cairo Geniza, continue this interpretive tradition. Chayyim Vital kept a diary of veridical dreams (both his own and the dreams of others) concerning himself. The most complete Jewish work of dream interpretation is Pitron Chalomot by the Turkish rabbi Solomon ben Jacob Almoli.

Chasids considered dreams to be very important. There are innumerable stories of dead Chasidic masters appearing to their families and/or disciples in dreams, dispensing advice and revelations. Some masters also recorded their own dreams, relating them to their followers with appropriate interpretations. Chasids frequently bring their own disturbing dreams to their **rebbe**s for interpretation and counsel in dealing with their ominous implications.

There are several traditions about the angel who is in charge of dreams, the Sar ha-Chalom. This angel is sometimes identified with **Gabriel**, the angel of revelation (Zohar I:149a).

There are various remedies for bad omens revealed in dreams, including fasting (Shab. 11a; Tan. 12b; *SCh* 226, 349), giving **charity** (B.B. 10a), or reciting talismanic verses from Scripture upon waking (Ps. 30:12; Jer. 31:13; Deut. 23:6; Zech. 10:2). There is also a **Prayer** for defense against ominous dreams, *Hatavat Chalom*, which is recited before a **priest** while he is pronouncing the Priestly Blessing (Ber. 55b). Sefer Chasidim teaches one should only reveal the contents of a dream to someone who loves you (447). Based on a popular belief that a dream comes true “as it is interpreted,” an individual may enlist three friends to magically nullify a bad dream by relating the dream and reciting the phrase, “It is a good dream,” to which the friends respond, “Yes it is

good, may it be good, may God change it to good." *SEE* BAAL HA-CHALOM; DIVINATION; INCUBATION; NECROMANCER NECROMANCY; TA'ANIT CHALOM.

Du Partzufim: "Two Faces [of Divinity]." This term, cognate to the Greek term *syzygy*, signifies the primordial duality that makes creation possible: the attributes of strict justice and mercy; male and female; even the written and oral Torah.[1] *SEE* EROTIC THEOLOGY; IMAGE, DIVINE

1. Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, 53–59.

Dumah: (דומה). "Silence." An alternative name for **Domah**, the **Angel** of the grave and/or **Egypt** (Ber. 18b; Chag. 5a; Shab. 152a). In some sources, he functions as a psychopomp. In Zohar II:18a he is declared "head demon of Gehinnom." Dumah is also a name for one of the compartments of Gehenna, based on Psalm 94:17.

Dumiel: (דומיאל). **Guardian angel** of the Persians and/or a gate guardian of **heaven** (*Hechalot Rabbati*).

Dwelling: (מעון/*Maon*). One of the **seven heavens**. It is the level that holds all the lower ranks of **Angels** and the heavenly choir. Here Israel's praises are sung before God every day (Chag. 12b–13a).

Dybbuk: (דבוק). "Clinging/Possessing Spirit." A *dybbuk mi-ruach ra*, a "clinging of an evil spirit," also referred to as a *ibbur ra*, is a **ghost** or disturbed transmigrating **Soul** that possesses the **Body** of a living person. While **demonic possession** has a history going back to the **Bible**, the idea of **possession** by the souls of the dead has a more sporadic record. Josephus clearly alludes to the experience of the living being possessed by "the spirits of wicked men" in the 1st century CE (*Wars* 7:184–185). Subsequently, there are vague and non-specific connections between **demons** being revenants of the dead, and another that links demons to human illness to be found Jewish writings of antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Yet, explicit reports of pneumatic possession of the type that Josephus offers are absent in Jewish literature for more than a millennium. Even the term *dybbuk* is a late phenomenon—early accounts simply speak of *ruchim*, "spirits." Dybbuk accounts historical coincide with the spreading belief in **reincarnation** among Jews from the 13th century on:

> If there is even one organ in which the Holy One does not dwell, then he [the person] will be brought back into the world of reincarnation because of this

organ, until he becomes perfected in his parts, that all of them may be perfect in the image of God. (T.Z.)

It is this belief that human souls can move from **Body** to body, yet may be retarded in their progress by **sin**, that parallels a rise reports ghostly possession.

According to pre-Lurianic Jewish **mysticism**, the dybbuk is a sinner who is seeking refuge from the punishments of the afterlife or who for some reason has been unable to continue its journey to its resting place in the Treasury of **Souls**. While the theoretical possibility of spirit possession is mentioned in the 13th century Sefer Zohar, usually in association with Jewish figures of the past, the return of spirit possession to recorded Jewish history had to wait until the 16th century, when accounts of possessions and **exorcisms** suddenly proliferate. Quite a number of notable Jewish figures from this time forward fill the role of exorcist, including Yosef Karo, Isaac Luria, Chayyim Vital, Isaiah Horowitz and the Chafetz Chayyim.

In Lurianic **Kabbalah**, the dybbuk phenomenon is more closely linked to the biblical **fate** of **karet**, being "cut off," and because of its sin the dybbuk has been exiled from its next proper stage of reincarnation. Thus it finds refuge in a living victim and must be exorcised. In most of these accounts, the dybbuk is a soul whose offenses have brought some intolerable punishment or caused the soul to wander, unable to complete its next cycle of transmigration. Occupying a living person either brings some relief from its torments or serves the dybbuk as an instrument to correct the offenses it committed while alive.

Therefore, in Luria's teachings, **exorcism** is a doubly therapeutic event, both relieving the possessed person and releasing the dybbuk to continue its journey into the afterlife (*Sefer ha-Brit*).



The dead haunting the living by E. M. Lilien

Eventually, many documented incidents of dybbuk possession are reported in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot, Sha'ar Ruach ha-Kodeshim,* Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah, Emek ha-Melech, *Sefer Nishmat Hayyim,* and other sources*:*

> The spirit which took possession of a young man was the spirit of one who, in his life, had sinned egregiously and that thereafter could find no peace. It had entered the youth's body after having been forced to flee its previous abode, the body of a cow which was about to be slaughtered. (*Ma'aseh Buch*)

Dybbuks mostly attack those who are spiritually vulnerable. It enters, for example, into a home with a neglected **mezuzah** because it knows someone resides there who is lax in spiritual practice and development. The dybbuk causes the victim to act out social inappropriate behaviors:

> [The dybbuk named] Samuel raised her [the victim's] legs and lowered them one after the other, with great speed, time and again. And with those movements, which he made with great strength, the blanket that was upon her fell off her feet and thighs, and she uncovered and humiliated herself before everyone's eyes. They came close to cover her thighs; but she had no self-consciousness in the course of any of this. Those who were acquainted with her knew of her great modesty … (The Great Event in Safed, Sec. 21) [1]

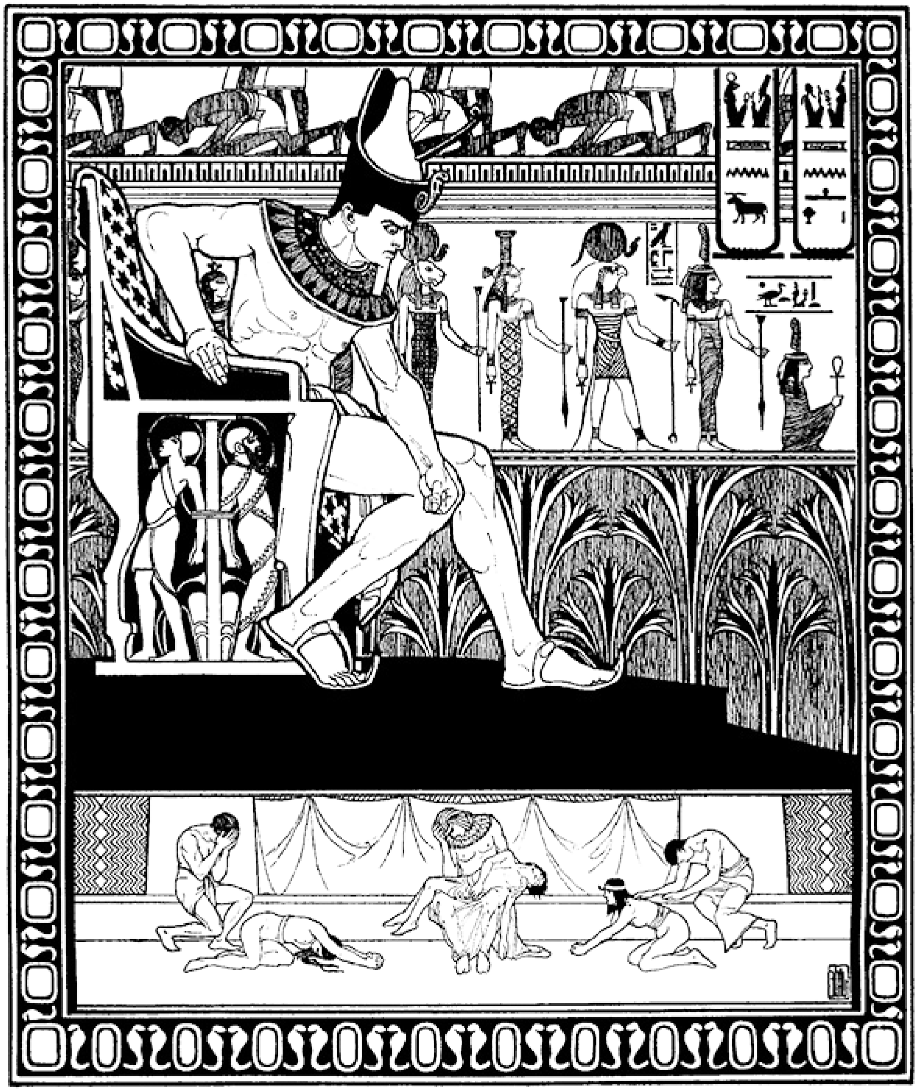
Dybbuks are also disproportionately male and disproportionately possess **women**, though there are also accounts in Jewish legal literature of men being possessed (*Darkhei Teshuvah* 4, no. 52). In some accounts, there is a sexual dimension to the dybbuk's choice of victim.[2]

The resolution of this affliction is an exorcism, usually performed by a rabbi, Kabbalist, or other recognized spiritual authority. *SEE* DEATH; GHOST; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY

1. Y. Bilu, "Dybbuk and Maggid: Two Cultural Patterns of Altered Consciousness in Judaism," *AJS Review* 21, no. 2 (1996), 348–66. Also see Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judaism*, 45–54, 64–68, 313.

2. J. Chajes, "City of the Dead," in *Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the Present*, M. Goldish (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 138.

E



Eagle: (נשר/*Nesher*). The eagle is a symbol of divine presence and favor, as well as a creature of mystery (Prov. 30:19; PdRK 26.4). Scripture compares God to an eagle that guards her young (Deut. 32). It also signifies **Chesed** in sefirotic theosophy.

An eagle is one of the four faces that **Ezekiel** sees among the holy creatures that make up God's **chariot** (Ezek. 1). Eagles served **Solomon** and performed many wondrous deeds in service to him. The **Ziz**, a mythical bird, is sometimes described as an eagle of giant proportions (B.B. 73a–74a). Protective words and phrases arranged in the image of an eagle occasionally appear on Jewish **amulets**. **Maimonides** is sometimes called "the great eagle."

Ears and Earring: The ears, as the organ of hearing, have great symbolism in Jewish rhetoric (Deut. 32:1). In the ordination of the Israelite **priesthood**, the right earlobe was one of three body parts sanctified with **blood** during the **ritual** (Lev. 8:22–14). The ears "breath," and ears of **Adam Kadmon**, which correspond to the sefirah of Binah, emanate supernal light. Their duality represents the separate divine attributes of "insight" and "discernment" (*Etz Chayyim,* Heichal Adam Kadmon, 4). The Kabbalist Abraham Azulai taught that a "demon of desire" resides in the right earlobe. In the biblical period, earrings were either **amulets** or symbols of devotion to Pagan gods, as indicated by Jacob's decision to bury them along with some **idols** in his possession (Gen. 34:4). *SEE* BODY.

Earth: (ארץ/*Eretz,* also *Adamah; Tevel; Archa*). Earth is one of the four elements that make up the world (Chag. 12b). In Israelite cosmogony, the earth was created on the third day. It rests upon mighty **pillars** and floats above a watery **abyss** below its crust (Pss. 24:2, 74:4, 104:5. 136:6). The earth was conceived as flat (Isa. 40:22), with an *axis mundi,* or **navel** (Ezek. 38:5; *Jubilees* 8; PdRE 11) and the edges or "ends" lined by **mountains** (MdRI 1). Sefer Yetzirah, following Job 26:7, understands the earth is suspended in space. According to the Sages, there are actually seven dimensions of the material world: Eretz, Adamah, Arka, *Harabah*, *Yabbashah*, Tevel, and *Heled*. An alternate list gives Neshiyya and Tziyya in place of *Harabah* and *Yabbashah* (Lev. R. 29:11; Mid. Teh. 9.11; *SY* 4:12; Zohar III:9b–10a; ZCh 89c; *LOTJ* 15). Mankind, being a **microcosm** of the world, is made from dirt drawn from the "four corners" of the earth, which explains why humanity comes in so many colors (PdRE 12).

According to the **Bible**, the earth is cursed by both the disobedience of **Adam** and **Eve** and the crime of **Cain** (Gen. 3). Still, the earth manifests God's will. It fails to yield produce for those who ignore God's will and can even swallow up those who offend God, as it did Korach ben Izhar and his supporters (Num. 16:32). And it continues to have a sacred status: in order to enter a zone of holiness, **Moses** must first shed his sandals, walking on the earth without a barrier made of death (leather) (Ex. 3).

According to the Sages, the earth lacked stability until the building of the **Mishkan** (PdRK 1.4–5). The earth can also protect those whom God would save. Thus in one legend, the Hebrew babies in **Egypt** were delivered from **Pharaoh's** decree by the earth opening up and hiding them from their would-be killers (Sot. 11b; Ex. R. 1:12).

The **Land of Israel** is holy and the earth of that land possesses special power. **Creation** began at the **Temple** mount and radiated out from there, making **Jerusalem** the center of the world (Tanh. Kedoshim 10; PdRK 26.4; PdRE 35). It is the soil from the grounds of the future Temple that God used to make Adam (*Targum* to Gen. 2:7). Soil from Israel binds a believer to the Holy Land and to God (2 Kings 5). When **Jacob** experienced his veridical dream promising him the whole Land of Israel (Gen. 28:13), God enfolded the entire Land of Israel and placed it beneath his **Body** (Chul. 91b). Being buried in the Land of Israel has some atoning power and so is a factor in **resurrection**. For that reason, pious Jews will insist on being buried with a small amount of dirt from Israel scattered in their coffin (*Ma'avar Yabbok*; commentary to *Mishneh* Torah, Hilchot Melachim, V).

Some conceived of the earth as having awareness or intelligence through its own principle **Angel** (Num. R. 23:6). According to legend, King **David** once unleashed the waters trapped beneath the earth by moving the Even ha-Shetiyah, the Foundation Stone, which is found beneath the bedrock of the Temple.

Soil within the precincts of the Temple possesses special power. It is used in the trial by **ordeal** described in Numbers 5:17 to divine whether a wife has been unfaithful to her husband (M. Sot. 2:2; Sot. 17a). In the **golem** traditions, the creature must be partly constructed from earth within the confines of a **synagogue**. Ordinary earth stuffed in the mouth of a **vampire** that has died will prevent it from becoming the undead. Earth thrown over the shoulder after a funeral discourages the **evil eye**. *SEE* BURIAL; DIRECTIONS; MOUNTAIN.

East: (קדם/*Kedem*, מזרח/*Mizrach*). The east is a symbol of spatial, temporal, and spiritual antiquity. Like the **sun**, time and primeval forces emerge from the east. Thus **Eden**(and therefore Paradise) is in the east and it is from there that primordial man migrates to Israel, which is at the center of the **Earth** (Gen. 2, 11). It is therefore also a realm of power. It was a measure of **Solomon's** power that he "surpassed the **wisdom** of the Children of the East" (1 Kings 5:10). The people of the East were famed for their knowledge of **magic** and **astrology** (Eccl. R. 7:23; PdRK 4:3; Tanh. Chukkat 6).

Kabbalah treats the word for "east," *MiZRaCH*, as an acronym: ***Mi**-tzad **Z**eh **R**uach **Ch**ayyim* ("From this side comes the spirit of life"). The **Bahir** calls the east the "seed," the place from which generativity flows. The **Zohar** associates it with the sefirah Tiferet (I: 85a). It is personified in the angel **Uriel**.

The **wind** that parted the sea for **Moses** and the Israelites blew from the east. The ancient **Temple** faced east, with the **Holy of Holies** oriented to the west, so the rays of the rising sun would enter the building as it ascended. Jewish homes often have a "Mizrach," a printed **amulet** with protective images and verses, sometimes in microscript, which is mounted on the eastern wall of the house, in the direction of **Prayer**. *SEE* DIRECTIONS.

East, Children of: *SEE* CHILDREN OF THE EAST.

Eating: Since Judaism considers the material world to be the great theater of divine purpose, and the human **Body** in particular is the vehicle of that purpose, the consumption of food plays a central role in all areas of Jewish thought, and has significance both exoteric and esoteric.[1] More than just fuel and nutrition, eating is both a social imperative and spiritual discipline (Zohar II:153a, 255a; Zohar III:189b). Eating often is equated with joy (Deut. 16:11, 26:11), nonetheless, from the very beginning of **Hebrew** literature, Jews have a paradoxical relationship with eating (Gen. 2:16, 3:17–19); **Adam** and **Eve** cover themselves with the leaves from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, from which they just ate, symbolic of eating's dual capacity to enlighten and degrade (Zohar I:36a–b). At the very end of history, the eschaton will be marked with a feast (Isa. 25:6–8). Food is often associated with the miraculous (Num. 11:31–34; 1 Kings 17:12–16).

The rules of kashrut (Lev. 11; 17:13–16; Deut. 14:21) imbue select edibles with potential holiness, and others with the burden of impurity. Eating is a metaphor for acquiring knowledge of **Torah** (MdRI I:171; Ber. 64a; B.B. 145b; Zohar III:33b). Dining can be the occasion for revelation (Ex. 24:4–11; Zohar II:62b–63a). This is particularly true in the mystical tradition.

Eating does not just benefit humanity. Failure to eat the prescribed meals on the **Sabbath** brings harm to the upper worlds (Zohar II:88b). Conversely, satisfaction with a meal is a mimetic experience of the sefirah of **Chesed**, of being filled with "goodness." (*Sefer ha-Rimmonim* 104–105). *SEE* BREAD; FOOD.

1. J. Hecker, *Mystical Bodies, Mystical Meals: Eating and Embodiment in Medieval* Kabbalah (Detroit, MI: Wayne State Press, 2005), 1–18.

Ebed Melech: A foreign courtier, an Ethiopian, in the court of King Zedekiah. One tradition claims this is just another name for **Baruch**, the prophet **Jeremiah**'s secretary. According to the Greek **Apocalypse of Baruch**, the righteous gentile Ebed Melech slept through the entire sixty-six years of the Babylonian **exile**.

Rabbinic legends credit him with entering **heaven** alive, like **Elijah** and **Enoch** (Yalkut 2:367).

Eclipse: (ליקוי). Both lunar and solar eclipses are considered ill **omens** (Isa. 3:26, 13:10). Because the **moon** is a symbol of the Children of Israel, a lunar eclipse is particularly ominous for Jews, while a solar eclipse bodes ill for gentiles. On the other hand, the **Talmud** expounds that the **sun** is eclipsed when a great rabbi dies and is not honored, indicating Jews are in a state of spiritual decline, for Baba Batra 75a compares “the face of **Moses** to the face of the sun.” So a solar eclipse signals an “eclipse of the [spiritual] sun.”

In Talmud, tractate Sukkah 29a preserves the teaching that the appearance of an eclipse, along with its exact location in the sky, can be read to know the specific type of blight (famine, war, etc.) and/or the population who will be most affected. *SEE* ASTROLOGY; DIVINATION; OMEN.

Ecstasy: (התפעלות/*Hitpaalut*, also *Hishtapchut ha-Nefesh*). A state of transcendent exaltation; enthusiasm. In the **Bible**, it is associated with the prophetic experience (Num. 19; 1 Sam. 19). In Talmudic times, ecstatic dancing was a central part of **rituals** such as the water libation ceremony. Later Judaism considers it a desirable state of mind for **Prayer** and worship. **Chasidism**, especially, creates worship services and spiritual gatherings (**tish** and farbrengen) conducive to ecstatic worship [1] and Jewish spiritual practices for achieving a state of ecstasy include chanting, **dance**, **music**, **weeping**, and **meditation**. *SEE* JOY AND HUMOR.

1. Rabinowicz, *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, 100.

Eden, Garden of: (גן אדן/*Gan Eden*). The mythic realm of primordial humanity, over time the term has become synonymous with “Paradise.”

In the **Bible**, God situates the Garden on **Earth** between four rivers: the Tigris, Euphrates, Gihon, and Pishon (Gen. 2:8). The Garden is technically **east** of Eden. At its center grew two cosmic **trees**, the **Tree of Life** and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. After the **sin** of **Adam** and **Eve**, humanity is expelled from the Garden, and the route back is barred by two **Cherubim** armed with a single fiery sword (swords evidently being in short supply).

In the rabbinic writings, Eden, like **Jerusalem**, is simultaneously located on earth and within the precincts of **heaven** (M. Ber. 5:3). The Sages describe an earthly garden, *Gan Eden shel ha-Aretz*, which mirrors (imperfectly) the heavenly Garden, *Gan Eden shel Malah* or *shel Elyon*. Eventually there evolves

an idiomatic and symbolic distinction between *Gan* and *Eden*. *Gan* is the earthly portion, while *Eden* is the locality where the dead reside (Shab. 119a; Ber. 18a; Ket. 103a; Zohar III:182b).

The **Cave** of Machpelah is the entryway to the higher Eden (Mid. Teh. 92:6). Its entrance is guarded by myriads of **Angels**, who welcome the righteous dead, garbing them in glory. Each dead **Soul** rests beneath their individual canopy and partakes in delicacies. Each heavenly day, the person undergoes a complete life cycle, being a child in the morning, a youth in the afternoon, and a mature adult in the evening. Every variety of fruit and spice tree grows there, each of unsurpassed beauty and fragrance (Yalkut Bereshit 20; Ber. 34b).

The medievals elaborate on the image of the celestial Garden, describing it as a walled enclosure of astronomical proportions, filled with precincts and **palaces**. There are many such realms, usually seven (corresponding to the **seven heavens**), each serving as the residence for different categories of meritorious souls. Thus there is a palace for those who were martyred, another for the young, and another for those **women** who cared for the ill and aged for many years (*SGE*). There angels attend upon the dead, who are refreshed by the fragrance emanating from the **Tree of Life** .

In addition to imagining Eden as a garden, rabbinic literature often describes it as a yeshiva shel malah, an academy on high, where the dead **study** Torah and where the **secrets** that eluded our understanding in life are revealed at last (Gen. R. 49:2; Num. R. *17*:6).

Gehenna abuts directly on the Garden. *SEE* ADAM; ETERNAL LIFE; EVE; GUF HA-DAK; HECHALOT.

Edom: The name of the tribal nation dwelling southeast of Israel, regarded in Israelite tradition to be the descendants of **Esau**. In rabbinic literature, the word became an encoded term, an occult reference first for the Roman Empire, and later for Christendom that arose in its place (Gen. R. 63:13, 65:9; *LoJ* 5:272).

Egg: (ביצה/*Beitzah*). Eggs are virtually universally seen as symbols of life, immortality, and mystery and are therefore filled with magical potential. Two eggs produced by the same hen on a single day is a bad **omen** (it is certainly a bad omen for the chicken, as the quickest remedy for averting that particular prodigy is to kill the hen that laid them).

eating the roasted egg that is part of the Passover Seder plate brings good luck. Eggs were used in folk medicine, as well as the preparation of protective talismans. For the latter, the egg would be inscribed with a magical formula and

then consumed, either as a means of **purification** for the **amulet** maker, or as part of the amulet-making process itself (*Sefer Rokeach*).

Eggs were an important ingredient in **love** potions and **memory incantations**. They could be consumed or buried near the target person or at a location of power, such as a crossroads. Eggs are also aphrodisiacs, stimulating virility. Eggs have a guardian spirit that may be consulted for purposes of **divination**. Presumably, this involves breaking the egg and studying the pattern created (Sanh. 101a).

Egoz: *SEE* NUT.

Egypt: (מצרים/*Mitzrayim*). "Ten measures of witchcraft were given to the world; nine measures went to Egypt" (Kid. 49b). The land of Egypt has been associated with mystery and the occult since earliest Jewish history, with tradition viewing it as a breeding ground for **magic** and **witchcraft** (Sanh. 104b; Kid. 49b). The biblical contest between **Moses** and **Pharaoh's** sorcerers (Ex. 7:8–8:15) sets the tone for all subsequent Jewish attitudes toward Egypt.

Because of its biblical associations, as well as its exotic status in the Greco-Roman imagination, Egypt continues to be regarded as a place of **sorcery** and arcane knowledge throughout Jewish tradition.[1] Two of the most famous Jewish alchemists, Maria Hebraea and Moses of Alexandria, hail from there. The Sages characterize Egypt as the "capital of witchcraft" (Gen. R. 86:5). The fact that the Neo-Platonic theurgists—precursors to the practical Kabbalists of the Middle Ages—first appeared in Egypt only reinforces the image of the country as a place of magic and supernatural power.

1. G. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2008), 196–197, 357.

Ehyeh: (אהיה). "I Am/I Will Be." Self-referential and cryptic name for God (Ex. 3:14). Most often linked to the sefirah of **Keter**.

Eight Kings of Edom: Listed in Genesis 36:31–36, these historical/mythic characters are included to account for the generations of **Esau**. This elaborate ellipsis in the biblical narrative invites interpretation by its very oddity. Starting with **Zohar**, and more fully developed by **Isaac Luria**, mystical tradition interprets these kings to actually be objects in a cosmic allegory. Zohar reads this not as an account of an ancestral branch off from the **tree** of Israel, but as a cosmic revelation, a figurative retelling of what preceded **Creation** (Zohar III:128a, 135a–b; *Sefer ha-Gilgulim* 15). The hermeneutic key is the phrase, "who reigned … before any king reigned over the Israelites." The "king" here is

taken to refer to the God of Israel. Prior to this creation, then, there were forces that disrupted God's effective rule of the earlier worlds. The references to the "death" of each king refer to God's undoing of these worlds. The key to the flaw in these primordial worlds is revealed in the word *edom*, *(*"red"): they were dominated by, "red [**blood**]." These worlds were too filled with strict judgment and lacked the balancing [*matkela*, in the language of the Zohar] quality of mercy in sufficient proportions for the cosmos to endure.[1] Another source interprets this overweening judgment as the meaning of the "**darkness**" that existed before the **light** of creation (*Galya Raza* MS II, 102b).

Significantly, the last generation of Edom includes the mention of Hadar's wife, Mehetabel, though no wives were cataloged before that. This is taken to mean the last iteration of judgment has a feminine counterpart added, which makes it balanced enough to not die, and so serves as the basis for judgment in this world:

> You must know the that [this] world is founded upon the side of the feminine and that heaven is revealed on the side of Darkness … and that its descendants [the earliest stages of divine creation] … they are ruled by that side which has no shame … and that is the prince of Esau, and therefore the Blessed Holy One established this world on the side of the feminine … [2]

To correct for past mistakes to the ordering of this world, God ensured this creation would continue by introducing Abraham, who embodies loving mercy (c*hesed*), only then followed by Isaac, who personifies justice (*din*), as does his first son **Esau**, who was born red (Gen. 25:24), but finally harmonizes the two forces with **Jacob**, the *ish tam* ("perfect man"—Gen. 25: 27), which is why, the Kabbalists reason, the earlier failed worlds get recounted in the midst of his saga.

Despite the damaging nature of pure judgment, mercy is not to be considered superior to justice, but its complement. As evidence of this, Luria cites the verse "Do not hate the Edomite, for he is your brother" (Deut. 23:8). Mercy needs judgment; Jacob needs Esau, even if they are in conflict. The essential point, made in mythological terms, is that the world requires a balance between these qualities for it to succeed (Zohar III:127a–145b; *Etz Chayyim*, Gate I).

1. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 116–117; G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1965), 112.

2. R. Elior, "The Doctrine of Transmigration in Galya Raza," *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, Lawrence Fine, ed. (New York: SUNY Press, 1995), 248–249.

Ein Sof: (עין סוף). "Without End." *Ein Sof* is the term used in **Kabbalah** for the true but hidden essence of God, which is perfect, unchanging, impassive, entirely unknown and unknowable to humans. Ein Sof is mystical Jewish version of the *causa causarum*, "the Unmoved Mover," at the heart of the *via negativa* model of God in scholastic philosophy. In the two-fold model of Kabbalistic divinity, all human knowledge of God is really knowledge of the ten emanated **sefirot**, the divine potencies "beneath" and "outside" Ein Sof. *SEE* ELOHIM; FACE OF GOD; NAMES OF GOD; PARTZUFIM; TETRAGRAMMATON.

El Adon: (אל אדון). "Lord God." *El Adon* is a mystical **Prayer** found in Jewish liturgy, a praise of God's celestial power that came from the circle of Jewish ecstatics known as the Merkavah mystics.[1] Like other mystical poems, such as *Shir ha-Kavod*, this is an alphabetic **acrostic** poem. This prayer, however, focuses not on the theology of the **glory** (though it does mention it), but on the angelic hosts and their equivalences to the celestial bodies. The association of **Angels**with stars and **planets** was common in late antiquity. It is, for example, a major feature of the Hebrew magical text Sefer ha-Razim. This idea provides a monotheistic rationale for the otherwise Pagan astrological belief that the stars influence the mortal realms—the stars and constellations, these writers are saying, are actually angels and messengers of divine will. The Merkavah adepts were obsessed with angels, their titles, and their powers. **Hechalot** texts focus on how the angels praise God and how the initiate can both imitate and manipulate God's angelic agents. It is also interesting that there are carefully crafted numerological features to this prayer. Verses have 10, 8, or 12 words. The first two stiches of five words, making a verse of ten equals the ten utterances that God made to form **Creation** (Avot 5.1). The nine lines in the middle consist of eight words, adding up to seventy-two, a number signifying the most powerful of God's names. The final two stiches are six words each, the complete verse of twelve represents the total houses of the **zodiac**, summarizing the celestial theme of the poem:

> God, Master of all creation/ Blessed and praised is He by all that breaths
>
> His greatness and goodness fill the universe/knowledge and wisdom surround him (Prov. 3:19)
>
> He is exalted above the holy beasts/and adorned in glory above the chariot (Ezek. 1:1–28)

Merit and Justice stand before His throne/Love and Mercy are before His glory (Ps. 89:15)

Goodly are the luminaries which our God created/made with Knowledge, Wisdom and Insight

He gave them power and energy/to have dominion over the world/

Full of splendor they radiate brightness/beautiful is their brilliance throughout the world

They rejoice in their rising and exult in their setting (Ps. 19:6)/performing with reverence the will of their Creator (Ps. 103:21)

Glory and honor do they give to His name, and joyous song to his majestic fame

He called forth the sun, and it shone/ He saw fit to regulate the form of the moon

All the hosts of heaven give him praise (Ps. 148:2–3);

Splendor and Greatness, the Seraphim and Ofanim and Holy Beasts.

An important feature of this poem are the reified figures of abstract values (**wisdom**, insight, merit, justice, **love**, and mercy) which are described as arrayed around the throne; some interpret them as if they are angelic beings. It is also not uncommon to find an element of animism/spiritism, such as appears in the descriptions of the heavenly objects. The **psalms** speak of mountains, rivers, and other geographic features as sentient beings. Here the **sun** and the **moon** are conscious of their roles and as consciously offering praise to their creator. Personification is, of course, a common literary technique, but this goes beyond rhetoric. A more philosophically oriented reading would call such language poetic panentheism. The last line of praises and angels is awkward, linguistically speaking. That's because the key words—*Shevach notnim … kol tz'va marom …* were selected so each word starts with the initial of one of the five planets visible to the ancients: *SHabbatai, Nogah, Kokhav, TZedek,* and *Mo 'dam* were the **Hebrew names** for Saturn, Venus, Mercury, Jupiter, and Mars. The string of angelic titles at the end adds three non-astrological angelic entities to the mix, yet lists of angels, seemingly include for no clear purpose, is actually a mark of authorship by the merkavah mystics.

1. M. Bar-Ilan, *Sitrei Tefillah v' Hekhalot*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1987), 115–120.

Eldad and Medad: Two elders in the Israelite camp who become seized with the spirit of **Prophecy** (Num. 11:26–29). According to rabbinic tradition, their prophecies included apocalyptic **visions** concerning the **Messiah** and **Jerusalem** (Sanh. 17a). These were purportedly recorded in an apocryphal work bearing their names, but that text has not survived. Given the rather florid and piquant biblical story, these two figure are remarkable in the neglect they receive from later commentators.

Eleazar: Talmudic Sage (ca. 1st–2nd century). Eleazar was a great spiritual virtuoso. He could make **food** (cucumbers, to be precise) magically materialize. He met with **Elijah**, who introduced him to the **Messiah**. He had many insights into the higher worlds, and when he expounded on them, he was engulfed in supernal fire. He was also a clairvoyant who could interpret when the actions of **animals** revealed them to be messengers of heaven (Sanh. 68a; Zohar I:98; Zohar II:28; ZCh).

Eleazar, Abraham: Alchemist (Unknown nationality, ca. 15th–18th century). Author of Uraltes Chymisches Werk. Despite the influential nature of this work, it is impossible to fix the dates of his life. But since his book was published in 1760, yet it contains quotes from known alchemical treatises from only as late as the 14th century, the window of his lifetime can be narrowed to roughly a 300+ year period. *SEE* ALCHEMY.

Eleazar bar Shimon: Talmudic Sage and mystic (ca. 2nd century). The son of Simon bar Yochai, he lived in a **Cave** with his father for thirteen years, studying the **secrets** of **Torah**. When he finally emerged, his **vision** had become so purified that it burned any imperfect thing he saw on the outside, so he was forced to return to the cave (Shab. 33b–34a; Gen. R. 79:6; J. Shev. 9:1).

Eleazar ben Judah of Worms: Ethicalist and mystic (German, ca. 13th century). Also known as Rokeach, Eleazar was a leading light of the *Chasidei Ashkenaz*, the **German Pietist** mystics. He experienced visions and could perform great acts of theurgy. He used his knowledge of divine names, for example, to slay an evil gentile prince who threatened the Jewish community (*Ma'aseh Buch*). He wrote numerous works pertaining to **mysticism**, **gematria**, and **magic**, including Sefer ha-Chayyim, Sefer ha-Rokeach, and a commentary on Sefer Yetzirah.

Eleazar the Exorcist: A 1st-century-CE exorcist of some renown mentioned by Josephus. He performed these deeds by means of **herbs**, in the name of

Solomon, and according to a method credited to the king of Israel (*Ant.* 45–49; *War* 7:196–207).

Elect of God: (בחיר אלוה/*Bechir Eloha*). A mysterious figure mentioned in the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. He is a mantic figure, with **secret** knowledge of the **zodiac**, occult books, and Scriptures.

Eliezer: The servant of **Abraham**. A former prince, he bore a remarkable resemblance to his master (PdRE 16; Gen. R. 59:8). He had many fantastic adventures in the service of Abraham during which he demonstrated heroic wit and cleverness (Sanh. 109b). He was the only person to accompany Abraham in the rescue of Lot (PdRK 8.2). The angel **Michael** accompanied him on his journey to find a bride for **Isaac** (Gen. R. 59:10). He is counted as one of nine people who entered Paradise without having to undergo **Death**. In one surprising tradition, he is identified as the giant Og (PdRE 16).

Eliezer of Metz: Talmudist (German, ca. 12th century) and author of *Sefer Yereim*. He is virtually unique among rabbinical authorities in his granting legal permission for Jews to summon both **Angels** *and* **demons** to achieve benevolent purposes.

Elijah: Also frequently called *Eliyahu ha-Navi*, "Elijah *the* Prophet," this **Prophet** of ancient Israel (ca. 9th century BCE) is one of the most celebrated heroes in Jewish lore. In his earthly mission he performed numerous **miracles** in his war against Israelite **idolatry** (1 Kings, 17–21). He was carried from **Earth** in a fiery **chariot** (2 Kings 2).

Rabbinic literature elaborates on many of his feats. He never died (B.B. 121b; Gen. R. 31;5; PdRK 9.4), instead, having ascended to **heaven** on a divine chariot, he became one of only a few select mortals who have been elevated to the status of an **Angel**, and is henceforth known as the "Angel of the Covenant" (Mal. 3:1; Ber. 4b; ZCh Ruth 2:1). Unlike **Enoch**, however, Elijah retains his material **Body**. On high, he fulfills essentially the same function that Peter does in popular Christian imaginings, directing the **Souls** of the dead to their proper destinations (*Seder Olam* 7; PdRE 15).

Another Jewish tradition claims he has always been an angel, specifically **Sandalfon**, and he only briefly takes human form (*Yalkut Reubeni*; *Pardes Rimmonim* 24:4; *Emek ha-Melech* 175c). A cognate tradition holds that he has had multiple earthly incarnations, most famously as **Phineas**, the zealous grandson of **Aaron** mentioned in the book of Numbers, a figure who predates

the historical Elijah by hundreds of years (PdRE 29). In subsequent Jewish tradition, Elijah fulfills three roles:

1. ***Angelus Interpres***—revealing heavenly secrets to mortals in this world.
2. Psychopomp—the spirit who guides souls in the **World to Come**.
3. Herald of the **Messiah** and *Malchut Shaddai*, the Kingdom of Heaven.

In countless Jewish stories, Elijah appears wandering the earth, performing wonders, intervening on behalf of the poor, teaching, and giving divine insight to those who recognize him (B.B. 121b; B.M. 59b). He is present at every **circumcision**, and a chair is set aside to welcome him (PdRE 29; *SCh* 585; SA 265:11; Zohar I:13a). In the absence of the spirit of **Prophecy**, it is a visitation of Elijah, along with the Bat Kol and the Ruach Elohim, which now provides humanity with knowledge of the divine will (PdRE 1). The phenomenon of xenoglossia is sometimes understood to be an Elijah visitation.[1] He also appears to people in visions and **dreams**. Kabbalistic texts frequently cite him as the source for various mystical teachings (Zohar I:2a).

Based on the verse in Malachi mentioned above, Elijah is understood to be the herald of the **Messiah**, as well as the figure who will restore the power of prophecy to the people Israel. Therefore his presence is invoked at every Passover Seder (*Haggadah*). It is he who will sound the great shofar of salvation, marking the start of the Messianic Era. One tradition states he will perform seven wondrous feats at that time: resurrecting **Moses** and the Generation of the Wilderness, bringing up Korach from the earth, resurrecting the **Messiah** ben Joseph, restoring the **Ark of the Covenant** and the other vessels of the **Temple**, displaying God’s scepter, flattening the **mountains** in fulfillment of **Isaiah**’s prophecy, and resolving the many unanswered questions and unresolved disputes concerning Jewish tradition. His permanent return to earth is a recurring theme in Jewish **Prayer** and liturgy (Eruv. 45a; M.K. 26a; PdRK 9:76; Gen. R. 21:5).

1. Bilu, “Dybbuk and Maggid,” 355.

Elijah ben Solomon: *SEE* VILNA GAON.

Elisha: Israelite **Prophet** and disciple of **Elijah** (ca. 9th century BCE). He received the mantle of Elijah (literally), as well as a “double portion” of his spirit. He performed numerous **miracles**, many of them variations on the miracles performed by his master, including feeding the poor, purifying water, **healing** a leper, and resurrecting the dead. A little testy about his personal

appearance, he had a group of boys mauled by she-bears after they ridiculed his baldness, though he was punished with a chronic illness for this particular misuse of his prophetic power (Sot. 47a). Even his **bones** had miraculous powers (2 Kings 13:20–21). The **Talmud** claims he did exactly twice as many miracles as Elijah.

Elisha ben Abuyah: Talmudic heretic (ca. 1st–2nd century). Also known by the euphemism *Acher*, "The Other," this student of the Sages lost his faith and is remembered as a provocateur and enemy of Judaism. The **Talmud** contains a couple of versions of his apostasy, but by far the most intriguing is the cryptic account of his involvement in the incident of the **four Sages** who entered **Pardes**/Paradise (Chag. 14b). The Talmud credits his apostasy to seeing the **Angel Metatron** sitting on a throne and concluding, "There are two powers in **heaven**" (Chag. 15a). Chagigah declares Elisha *kofer ha-ikkar*, "cut the root," possibility meaning he rejected the essence of faith (the oneness of God) because of that experience. When he died, he was doomed to a state of limbo. He was not punished in **Gehenna** for his sins, but neither was he allowed to enter the **World to Come**. His disciple R. Meir finally used his spiritual merit and power to burn his **Body**. Smoke rose from his grave for many years, until R. Yochanan used his spiritual merit to release him into the **World to Come** (Chag. 15b; M.K. 20a; *Nazir* 44a). *SEE* CHIBBUT HA-KEVER.

Elohim: (אלהים, also אל /El; אלה /Eloha). "God." The generic **Hebrew** word for divinity, it appears thousands of times in the **Bible**. The use of this name for God in a biblical passage is understood to denote that God's attribute of strict justice is forefront in that moment. In sefirotic metaphysics, *Elohim* is equated with Gevurah, the attribute of strict justice. Oftentimes, mystical texts will speak obliquely of *Elohim* being subordinate to Ein Sof, or of *Elohim* being the first creation of Ein Sof. The most common form of the word, *Elohim*, has been the subject of much sectarian and polemical speculation and over its interpretation because it appears to be in the plural form ("gods"). This is actually not a problem linguistically, as there are other examples of a majestic singular form with the *yud-mem* ending in Hebrew, such as *mayim* ("water") and *shamayim* ("sky"). *SEE* NAMES OF GOD.

Elyon: "Most High/Exalted." A epithet most often associated with God. It can also mean the "highest aspect" (Gen. 14:22; Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8–9; Pss. 73:11, 107:11). *SEE* NAMES OF GOD.

Emanation: (אצילות/*Atzilut* also *Shefa*). In classical **Kabbalah**, the material world comes into existence through the unfolding emanation of divine **light**, involving a progressive series of shielding or reducing that light in order for discrete bodies to emerge from the undifferentiated oneness of divine being. Duality and multiplicity as we experience it is only possible because the supernal light is increasingly "clothed" in garments of lower reality (i.e., the sefirot). This notion of divine "concealment" is fundamental to Jewish occult thought (*Pardes Rimmonim* 5:4, 25d; *Ketem Paz* 1:124c). It is markedly different, however, from the Lurianic teaching of **tzimtzum**, in which positive existence emerges in the absence of divinity, rather than in its concealment.[1] Later disciples of Isaac Luria craft elaborate accounts trying to reconcile the classical doctrine of emanation with their master's **myth** of divine withdrawal. De Vidas equated divine emanation with **love** (*Reishit Chochmah*, Sha'ar Ahavah 2, 1:367). *SEE* ADAM KADMON; CREATION; FOUR WORLDS OF EMANATION; PARTZUFIM; SEFIROT.

1. D. Blumenthal, *Understanding Jewish Mysticism*, vol. 1 (New York: KTAV, 1984), 162; also compare D. Matt, trans., *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 90–93.

Emek ha-Melech: "Valley of the King." An influential 17th-century book of **Kabbalah**, with numerous accounts of **reincarnation** and spiritual **possession**, written by Naftali Bacharach.

Encryption: Much of Jewish religious literature has features to it that can be characterized as "encoded," from its often terse and elliptical style to its pervasive use of polysemy, "Janus" words (words with dual valid meanings in context, such as appear in S o S 2:12), anagrams (Gen. 6:8), acrostics (Prov. 32), notarikons (Shab. 105b on Ex. 20:1), and symbolic **numbers**.

One form of systematic encryption found in Jewish writing, called **Atbash**, consists of inverting the values of the letters of the alphabet "mirror" style. Thus, in an atbash word, *alef* stands in for *Tav, bet* stands for *Shin*, etc. This may in fact be the earliest recorded method of encryption. It is already evident in the **Bible**, where the name *Sheshach* (Jer. 25, 51) is "Babel" (**Babylon**) in atbash code. This same method appears on the talismanic version of the Sh'ma, which is written on the reverse side of the **mezuzah** sheet.

There is another method of alphabetic substitution mentioned in **Talmud** known as the "Alef-Bet of Chiyya" (Suk. 52b) that was used to secretly teach Judaism during the time of Babylonian persecution. Later this method would be known as temurah. The use of "invisible ink" for sending **secret** messages is also

discussed (Shab. 104a–b). The extensive use of **abbreviations** (*roshei teivot*) is a simple and pervasive form of encryption that is adopted and extensively applied in **amulet** making.

Of course, **gematria**—finding hidden meaning in the numeric value of letters, words, and phrases—is the most famous and prevalent form of code in Judaism. *SEE* HAFUCH; MYSTERY; TZERUF/Tzerufim.

End of Days: *SEE* ESCHATOLOGY.

Endor, Woman of: Often incorrectly described as "the **witch**of Endor," this **necromancer** performed a séance for King **Saul**, despite his own royal prohibition against such practices (1 Kings 28). The episode is cryptic and short on details, but evidently the woman performed the **ritual** at **night** using an underworld god to raise the spirit of **Samuel** from the grave, who then spoke either through her or as a disembodied voice. Samuel pronounces doom upon Saul, confirming his worst fears that divine favor had withdrawn from him.

According to the Rabbis, a necromancer can see the summoned spirit, but only the one seeking an augury can hear its message. They also posit that she recognized Saul as the king because spirits arise differently for royalty than they do for commoners. The **Midrash** identifies the woman as Zefaniah, the mother of Abner, David's general (Lev. R. 26). *SEE* DIVINATION; NECROMANCER NECROMANCY; WOMEN.

Enoch: (*Chanoch*). One of the primordial **ancestors** of humanity. He was, significantly, seventh in the first ten generations of humans listed in Genesis. According to Scriptures, Enoch was the most **Righteous** of the antediluvians and "went with God … and he was not, for God took him." From this minimal information, much is extrapolated. He appears as an important figure in a slew of apocryphal works (I Enoch; *Jubilees*; Book of Giants). He is credited with the creation of writing, **astrology**, and receiving from **Angels** the **solar calendar** so precious to the **priests** who collected the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. To them, he was the prototype of all scribes, sages, and priests (I Enoch 12, 14, 80–82, 106–7; *Jubilees* 4). He was also an oneiromancer (Book of Giants). In places, his role is so exalted that he functions as the principle conduit of divine knowledge to mortals.

Some Jewish traditions held that Enoch ascended bodily into **heaven**, where he was transubstantiated into the princely angel **Metatron** (III Enoch), though there is at least one tradition that rejects this claim (*Targum Onkelos*, Gen. 5:24; Gen.

R. 5:24). Along with the name change, his material **Body** is consumed and replaced with a body of supernal fire. He is known by several angelic titles and names, including Sar ha-Panim, the Prince of the Divine Countenance and/or *Bar Enosh*, "Son of Man." Hebrew texts about Enoch and his angelic translation include Sefer Hechalot, Hechalot Rabbati, and *Sefer Chanoch.* *SEE* ENOCH, BOOKS OF.

Enoch, Books of: Multiple books exist in Greek, **Hebrew**, and Aramaic associated with the name of Enoch, such as III Enoch, the Book of Giants, and *Sefer ha-Razim de Chanoch*. Several others have been preserved only in translations (Slavonic and Ethiopic). There are many variations between the texts, and some contradict one another, but the cluster of elements that overlap in different versions are the story of his earthly role prior to **the Flood**, his ascension into heaven, his experience of apocalyptic revelations there, his involvement in the affairs of (fallen) angels, and his translation into an angel. SEE APOCRYPHA; ASCENT, HEAVENLY.

Enoch, First Book of: (I Enoch). A book that exists only in two variant translations, Greek and Ethiopic. The **Hebrew** original is not known to exist anymore, though we have found Hebrew/Aramaic fragments among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. The Ethiopic translation is an apocalypse that is divided into five books: the Book of the Watchers, the Book of Similitudes, the Book of the Course of the Heavenly Luminaries, the Book of Dreams, and the Epistle of Enoch. It includes the legend of the **fallen angel**, dream visions, visions of the final **judgment**, and other literary flotsam and jetsam. The Greek version shares some texts, and is only one-third the size of the Ethiopic version.

Enoch, Second Book of: (II Enoch). A Jewish pseudepigraphic work, probably written in **Egypt**, from the 1st century CE. Only Old Slavonic manuscripts (in two versions) have survived to this day. This rather cryptic book is also an apocalypse, revealing the workings of **heaven**, hell, and the end of the world. The book is one of the first to expound on the **seven heavens** and to give a detailed description of the pleasures of Paradise (and the first to associate the heavenly afterlife with **Eden**) for the righteous dead.

Enoch, Third Book of: (III Enoch). Also known *as Sefer ha-Hechalot, Sefer Chanoch,* or "Hebrew Enoch," it describes the process of mystical **ascent**. Unlike the early Enoch books, which reflect more purely a priestly spirituality, this work is also clearly rooted in rabbinic Judaism. A Talmudic Sage-Priest,

Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha ha-Kohen, is the central figure, and the work is most likely a product of merkavah mystics. It has been lumped together with the other, earlier Enochean books primarily because R. Ishmael encounters Enoch in **heaven**, in his angelic form of **Metatron**. This text narrates the mystical ascension of R. Ishmael into the **seven heavens** and his encounters there with angelic beings. It details the steps of angelification and transubstantiation of Enoch. It includes a description of the guf ha-briyot, the Treasury of **Souls**, and the transmigration of souls. *SEE* HECHALOT; HECHALOT RABBATI.

Enoch, Fourth Book of: (IV Enoch). A fragmentary Aramaic work found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, it includes many parts of other Enochean books, and may in fact be the earliest version of these works that we now have. The Book of Giants may also belong to the Enochean library.

Ephod: (אפוד). An embroidered garment of blue, **red**, purple, and gold (perhaps a short tunic or poncho) worn by the High **priest** and associated with oracular and cult functions (Judg. 8:26–27, 17:5; 2 Sam. 6:14; 1 Sam. 21:9). The Ephod was made from the interweaving of cloth with threads of gold **metal**, giving it a somewhat rigid, mail-like quality (Ex. 28:6–30; Yoma 71b). The High Priest’s breastplate was mounted on its front. It was evidently important that the High Priest wear it while fulfilling his oracular duties (1 Sam. 21–23; 30). When the High Priest wore it, all Israelites were forgiven any **sin** of **idolatry** (Zev. 87b). *SEE* URIM AND THUMMIM.

Ephraimites: The tribe descended from **Jacob's** eldest grandson. The **Prophets** among the Ephraimites enslaved in **Egypt** miscalculated the time of God’s deliverance by thirty years. When they attempted to leave, they encountered the Philistines, who slew 200,000 to 300,000 of the men (PdRE 48). *SEE* EXODUS.

Erelim: (אראלם). A category of angels. Their existence is derived from Isaiah 33:7, which reads: “Behold the valiant [*erelam*] shall cry out, the angels of peace shall weep bitterly.” While there may be a progressive parallelism intended here (i.e., “both mortals *and* divine beings weep”) esoteric readers of this verse draw a straight parallel between the *erelam* and the “angels of peace”—the verse is taken by many commentators to refer to two types of angels.

Maimonides lists Erelim among the ten classes of angels (*Hilchot Yesodei ha-*Torah 2:7). They are ascribed a number of overlapping functions in different sources. They seem to be closely tied to moments of **Death** and destruction. Thus Chagigah 5b reiterates the Isaiah passage regarding the destruction of the

Temple, while Jewish mystics make them witnesses to the humiliation of the **Shekhinah** *(*Zohar I:182a; also see Lam. R. proem 24 and 1:23).

Erelim apparently have the responsibility to retrieve the **Souls** of the righteous dead. Thus in the account of the death of Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi, during which the Sages attempted to keep him alive via continuous **Prayer**, a disciple finally admits defeat by saying:

> Both the Erelim and the mortals held on to the Holy Ark [Rabbi Judah]; but the angels overpowered the mortals, and the Holy Ark has been captured. (Ket. 104a)

Notice the militaristic turn of phrase, an allusion to the capture of the **Ark of the Covenant** by the Philistines in 1 Samuel 11. Since Erelim are linked to war and destruction elsewhere, perhaps there is a Valkyrie-like element to them.

They also have a strong predisposition to cry; in Genesis Rabbah 56:6, the Erelim that weep over the thought that **Abraham** will go through with the divine instruction to kill his son. They personify divine pathos. Paradoxically, given what appears above, they are also associated with life. In Midrash Konen, they are the angels described as the genius of foliage, impelling plant growth (2:25).

Eretz: "Earth." Conventionally a term for "land" or "**Earth**," but in the **Zohar**, Eretz is the second of the seven worlds. **Adam** was expelled there from the **Garden of Eden**. It is a realm of **darkness**. Adam was released from there when he repented his **sin** against God.

Erotic Theology: An ideology, discourse, or other religious rhetoric that views human gender, desire, and sexuality as a, or the, appropriate analogy, metaphor, or symbol for the relationship between God and the **Creation**. It is most often used in framing divine-human relations. While martial, and even erotic, imagery is used by the prophets in various passages (Jer. 2:32; Hos. 3, 9:1; Ezek. 15), the *locus classicus* for relating to God via the **language** of Eros is the Song of Songs. This biblical book serves as the springboard for a long and varied tradition of erotic theology appearing in textual interpretation, liturgical poetry, and religious parable. **Kabbalah** develops a metaphysics that is totally steeped in eroticism. *SEE* BRIDE OF GOD; PHALLUS; SEX; ZIVVUGA KADISHA.

Esau: Son of **Isaac**, brother of **Jacob** (Gen. 25–34). According to the **Midrash**, he possessed the magical garments of Adam, which gave him power to slay or capture any **animal** (PdRE 24). Because of this, an **Angel** had to interfere in his hunting expedition (Gen. 28) in order to give Jacob more time to pull off his

deception of Isaac and receive his father's blessing. Later, filled with bloodlust, Esau attempts to kill the returning Jacob by biting him in the neck and sucking his **blood** (PdRE 37), but is foiled when God turns Jacob's neck to ivory (or marble). Later, he attempted to seize control of the **Cave** of Machpelah from Jacob and was slain by Chushim, the son of Dan, in the ensuing confrontation (PdRE 39).

In time, Esau comes to be regarded as the archetype of Israel's enemies, particularly Rome. Many Midrashic stories featuring Esau are actually encoded criticisms of Rome and, later, **Christianity**. His guardian angel is **Samael** (Tanh. Vayishlach 8). The **Zohar** calls him "a true offspring of the **serpent**," a demonic figure (I: 145–146a; 166a). *SEE* PATRIARCHS AND MATRIARCHS.

Eschatology: Greek, "Study of end things." Eschatology is the branch of esoteric knowledge involving the end of the world, usually encompassing the final divine intervention into history, the apocalyptic **fate** of Israel, the establishment of the Kingdom of God, the **resurrection**, and the Day of Judgment.

One of the beliefs that distinguished Israelite religion from the pagan religions of the ancient Near East was the novel Israelite notion of time that history not only goes in cycles, but also advances to a unique conclusion.[1] By contrast, most polytheistic peoples had a notion of mythic time, in which history moves primarily in reiterating cycles, with a limited concept of an unfolding future that was essentially different from the past. The biblical prophets taught that history was advancing toward an end that would be unlike that which had preceded it.[2] They also taught that there will be a divine realm transcending earthly existence in which all humans would participate.

Major biblical sources for eschatological teachings include Daniel, Zechariah, the last quarter of Ezekiel, and Isaiah 40–66. As expounded in numerous post-biblical writings (most famously in the many **apocalyptic** books of late antiquity, but also in the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, **Talmud**, **Midrash**, and kabbalistic texts), the exact details of the end are very much up for grabs.

Jewish accounts of "the end" encompass four related issues: personal salvation and national redemption in this world (Resurrection and Messiah), the fate of the **Soul**, and the collective afterlife beyond this world (eternal life and the World to Come).[3]

These four topics are usually articulated through these specific mythic motifs:

1. The restoration of the people **Israel** to the **Land of Israel**, usually including the return of the ten lost tribes.

2. The reestablishment of the ideal institutions of Israelite religion: the rebuilding of the **Temple**, and the restoration of Jewish sovereignty through the Davidic dynastic, personified by the person of the eschatological Messiah.

3. The end of chaos in the social and natural order; the final triumph and reign of God over all.

4. The radical transformation of the world order: the end of the world (really, the end of history) and the fate of the dead.

Most classical Jewish writings on these themes are impressionistic and episodic. Themes and descriptions often overlap, or are conflated together, giving the impression that various teachers and texts contradict one another. It was not until well into the Middle Ages that commentators would provide comprehensive and summary descriptions of Jewish eschatological teachings. The many nuances of individual **vision**s and variations among the teachers of Israel are too numerous to catalog. *SEE* MESSIAH; WORLD TO COME.

1. Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (New York: Schocken Books, 1960), 358–59.

2. K. Koch, *The Prophets*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1992), 1–6.

3. P. S. Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), 18–20.

Esdras, the Books of: Apocryphal books of the Greco-Roman period attributed to the scribe Ezra. Keeping track of the various texts is a discipline unto itself. I *Esdras* is also known in some circles as III *Esdras*. II *Esdras* is also known as IV *Ezra*. This confusing situation arose when early Church Fathers designated the biblical books Ezra and Nehemiah to be “I and II Esdras.” Thus I and II contains the biblical accounts of Ezra. III and IV (or I and II) *Esdras*, on the other hand, are apocalyptic texts full of eschatological visions, including the **fate** of Israel, the return of the ten lost tribes, and a calculation of the end of times. *SEE* APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE.

Essenes: Meaning uncertain; possibly either Aramaic, *Chasayya* (“Pious Ones”) or Greek, *Hosiotes* (“Holy Ones”). A mysterious Jewish sect of the Greco-Roman period mentioned by the contemporary writers Philo, Josephus, and Pliny. Their respective accounts of the Essenes are somewhat contradictory, and while the Dead Sea Scrolls offer us new possible understandings of the sect (assuming they were the owners of the DSS library), there is still much we do not understand about them. The sect was a closed society, dominated by hereditary **priests**, requiring a period of initiation and trials before being accepted through oaths and **ritual purification**. The full teachings of the group

were a **secret**, with discipline being enforced by a court of one hundred initiates. At least some initiates were celibate and lived in communal quarters.[1] Essene teachings include a profound interest in **Angels** and **eschatology**, the latter of which centers on a priestly messianic figure, the "Teacher of Righteousness." They were masters of **divination** and in the making of medicines and potions (War 2:119–61; *Ant.* 18:11, 18–22). *SEE* COMMUNITY RULE; DEAD SEA SCROLLS; MANUAL OF DISCIPLINE.

1. F. G. Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill/Eerdmans, 1994), lii–lvi.

Essingen, Samuel: Noted **Baal Shem** (German, ca. 18th century). He was a folk healer, **amulet** maker, and exorcist.

Esther: This savior of Persian Jewry, a central figure in the biblical book bearing her name, was vouchsafed many **miracles** during her life. One of the four most beautiful **women** in all history, she was an orphan taken in by her uncle **Mordecai**. God gave Mordecai the ability to nurse the baby from his own breast. Once the King singled her out from among his harem to be Queen of Persia, the **Holy Spirit** enhanced her already legendary beauty (*Targum Esther Sheni*). To bring about a favorable outcome in her efforts to save the Jews, **Angels** orchestrated her encounter with King Ahasuerus to plea for the life of her people. She retained her beauty throughout her life and never appeared to age (Es. R.).

Esther, Apocrypha of: This Greek language account of the events of the biblical book of Esther includes descriptions of Esther's prophetic **dreams** not found in the **Bible**.

Esther, Book of: Built entirely around an acute and absurdist **meditation** on anti-Semitism written in the form of a court farce, the book of Esther includes some pointed borrowing from mythology in telling its story. Esther and **Mordecai**, the "Persian" names of the Jewish heroine and hero, are seemingly derived from the ancient Near Eastern deities, Ishtar and Marduk (alternatively, in the case of **Mordecai**, the Sages think it may be derived from *mor dror*, "dripping myrrh" [Meg. 10b], which the Rabbis connected to myrrh, a popular contraceptive substance. Esther's **Hebrew name** is Hadassah, "**myrtle**," a **tree** used medicinally in the ancient world for its contraceptive effect, offering a possible parallel to Mordecai's name.)

In fact, the book of Esther reminds the mythologically minded of the **myth** of Myrrha, the woman unhappily married off in an incestuous-rape relationship to her father the king, where she suffers drunken sexual assaults until the gods take pity on her, transubstantiating her into the myrrh tree. The tree's **oil**, which drips from the branches like tears, was also a prime contraceptive substance (Notice the six-month treatment of the virgins with myrrh prior to their night with the king in Esther 2:12).

There are some striking parallels between the myth and the book of Esther:

a. Incest—What was Esther and Mordecai's relationship? The Rabbis suspected it was more than "uncle" and "ward" (Meg. 13a–13b);

b. A transgressive **marriage**—in Esther, both she and the king are forbidden to each other by both Jewish **law** and Persian royal taboos; A drunkard king (Esth. 1:10); rape (Esth. 7:8);

c. And finally, death and salvation through a tree (Esth. 7:9–10). [Translated as "stake," or "gallows" in Hebrew execution device is consistently called an eitz, "tree," in the four places it is mentioned.]

All of which suggests that the story of Esther may have as much basis in myth, the deliberate Judaic reworking of Pagan mythology, as it does in any historical event.[1]

The book of Esther is the only biblical book not found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. Perhaps, given the **Qumran** community's obsession with ritual **purity** and ambivalence toward sexuality, a book that makes a heroine out of a Jewish woman who willingly becomes a concubine and then queen to a gentile was just too much to accept. Given the eccentric features of the book, which never mentions God, the Talmudic Sages debated whether to include this profane book, in the biblical canon, but did so anyway.

1. J. Prouser, "As the Practice of Women," *Conservative Judaism* (Winter 2001).

Estrie: *SEE* VAMPIRE.

Et: (את). This linguistic feature of **Hebrew**, called a direct object indicator and spelled *alef-tav*, it is never translated when it appears in a text. Thus in Genesis it reads, "When God began to create [*et*] the heavens and [*et*] the earth …" This purely grammatical device that appears thousands of times in the **Bible**, however, has been interpreted to be of occult significance. According to the interpretation of **Akiba**, *et* encompasses everything in between (Men. 29b). For example, in the case of Genesis, the *et* refers to all the created things in heaven

and on **Earth** that are not explicitly mentioned in the **Creation** accounts, such as **Angels** (Pes. 22b; Chag. 12a).

In the **Zohar**, it signifies **Shekhinah** (I: 29b, 53b, 247b). Thus, in early Jewish mystical thought, *et* symbolizes totality, because alef is the first and tav the last letters of the **Hebrew alphabet**.

Eternal Life: Jewish tradition has always taught that mortals have, or will have, a continued existence after **Death**. In Isaiah 25, the **Prophet** promises that a time will come when death will disappear entirely. The **Bible** describes an underworld realm of the dead called Sheol (grave), where **Souls** dwell in dark **silence**. In Greco-Roman times the first descriptions of a heavenly afterlife start to appear in Jewish literature. In Berachot 34b it is taught:

> R. Hiyya b. Abba also said in the name of R. Johanan: All the prophets prophesied only for the days of the Messiah, but as for the world to come, "No eye has seen, oh God, beside Thee."

But even this did not prevent the continued development of a rich mythic tradition about the nature of eternal life.

In rabbinic imagination, **Torah** is synonymous with the **Tree of Life**, which was lost as a consequence of the **sin** of **Adam** and **Eve**. Thus, the giving of the Torah at Sinai restores the possibility of human immortality. In addition to this, because of their immersion in Torah, Saintly men are also immune from most (but not all) forms of death (Shab. 55b). The souls of the **Righteous** are escorted to their reward by three companies of **Angels**, each uttering their own message of comfort. For the wicked, three myriads of destructive angels serve as escort, quoting Scriptural verses of reproach (Ket. 104a). The quality of the afterlife an individual has is based on moral criteria: the righteous will enjoy eternal favor and ease, the wicked face annihilation, and those of us in between, the Beinonim, must face trials and punishment for our sins, to ensure that in the end we will enjoy reconciliation with God. Descriptions of what eternal life entails vary across Jewish tradition and sources.

The belief in **resurrection**, the bodily restoration of the dead in the End of Days, is based on Ezekiel 37, Daniel 12:2, and Isaiah 65:17. Resurrection has been the predominant way that Jews understand and envision the afterlife (II *Maccabees*, **Talmud**, and the Gevurot **Prayer** of the daily liturgy). Exceptionally righteous figures, however, can be translated directly into **heaven**, where they become celestial luminaries and angels (I Enoch 102). Examples of such individuals include **Enoch**, **Elijah**, and Serach bat Asher.

Under Greek influence, there also arises a belief in a disembodied eternal existence (*Jubilees* 23; I Enoch 103–4; IV *Maccabees* 14). Later rabbinic tradition eventually reconciles these competing traditions of bodily resurrection and disembodied heavenly existence.

Finally, Jewish **mysticism** teaches that there is a mechanism involving transmigration of souls that is not the terminal **fate** of the soul, but is also part of the journey toward eternal life. *SEE* BURIAL.; CHIBBUT HA-KEVER; DEATH; EDEN, GARDEN OF; JUDGMENT; REINCARNATION; WORLD TO COME.

Etrog: (אתרוג). A citron. An etrog is one of the *arba minim*, the four species Jews are commanded to gather for the celebration of the holiday of Sukkot (Lev. 23:40). As the spherical element in the otherwise linear/phallic lulav bouquet, the etrog symbolizes the female aspect of **fertility** when joined to the three branches representing the male force:

> “He [God] planted an etrog among them [the male plants] … the etrog is female … The lulav is male …” (Bahir 172, 198; Also see *Sha’ar ha-Kavanot* 5)

Etrogim (pl.) have multiple magical uses. Pregnant **women** eat etrogim that have already been used during Sukkot to protect them and ease their pain during childbirth. The stem from an etrog is sometimes placed in the bed to help with a difficult labor. Sefer Raziel advises using an etrog in the purification ritual before the preparation of an **amulet**. To accomplish this, a magic formula is written on the etrog. The message is then wiped off with wine and the etrog consumed.

Eve: (חוה/*Chavah*). “Living [thing].” The mother of all humanity (Gen. 2–3:20), who actually is never mentioned again in any other book of the Hebrew Canon. According to one interpretative tradition, she was not the first woman God created; Alef-Bet of ben Sira claims **Lilith** came before her. The bulk of Jewish tradition, however, does not ascribe to the Lilith tradition. Instead, it teaches that God created Eve by dividing the androgynous **Adam** in half, separating his masculine and feminine aspects (Ber. 61a; Eruv. 18a; Gen. R. 8:1; *Sefer ha-Likkutim* 5b). God erected ten bejeweled canopies to serve as her bridal chambers. **Angels** were the witnesses and musicians at her **Wedding** to Adam (PdRE 12).

The **demons Samael**, in the form of a **serpent**, seduced her both mentally and physically while her **guardian angels** were away (Sot. 9b; Shab. 196a; AdRN

1:4). The corruption he ejaculated into her continued on down through the generations, adversely affecting humanity until the giving of the **Torah**, a **myth** that becomes prominent in **Kabbalah** (Zohar I:37a, 54a). Samael persuaded her to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and to induce Adam to do the same. She bore **Cain** and Abel on the same day; Cain was the child of her demonic lover, while Abel was the child of Adam.

After the birth of Abel, she and Adam separated for 130 years. During that time, incubi had intercourse with her in her **sleep** and she bore them many demons (Gen. R. 20:11). Some traditions hold that her third son, Seth, was actually her first child by Adam (Gen. R. 22:2, 23:5; PdRE 13). She was buried with her husband in the **Cave** of Machpelah (PdRE 20).

In Hebrew **amulet** traditions, Eve's name is frequently invoked in **amulet incantations**. Despite her besmirching by later interpretations, this tradition regards her to be a meritorious **ancestor** whose name offers protection.

Even ha-Shetiyah: (אבן שתייה). *SEE* FOUNDATION STONE.

Even Maskit: (אבן משחית). A demoness, the concubine of **Rahav**.

Even Numbers: *SEE* NUMBER; PAIRS

Evil: (רע/*Ra*). The most persistent conundrum for monotheism is the question, "Why is there evil?" If there is only one supreme power in the universe—God—and God is beneficent, how is it possible for evil to exist? There are essentially three solutions to this mystery, and arguably they can be collapsed into just two. Answer number one is that God's power is not supreme, whether by God's own will or some outside necessity, so evil is the manifestation of something outside God. This answer has the problem of walking a slippery slope toward dualism, and many monotheists have fallen hard down that slope. Thus some Christian sects explain evil through the existence of the Devil, whom they regard to be effectively a kind of "anti-God," operating independently of God's will. Most Christian theologians are aware of this trap, and avoid taking the logic of the devil quite so far, but many rank-and-file Christians have difficulty with the notion that God actually creates evil and/or controls the devil on some level.[1]

Most Jews (at least since late antiquity) have remained firmly monotheistic and almost universally rejected this argument. Judaism does not concede that any independent force can exist outside of God's power—leaving the problem of evil intact.

A second solution is to regard evil as a byproduct of human **free will**. Some

would argue that that is really just a more limited version of the “God is not the only power” argument. This argument posits that God has conceded some power to humanity by granting us free will. As such, we can choose to behave evilly if we wish. God’s power is constrained for our sake, but the reason for God doing this is a great mystery. Variations of this argument are found in Jewish circles, particularly among rationalist thinkers.

The third (or second) position argues that the appearance that evil has an independent existence is illusionary and all that appears “evil” from a human perspective is in fact truly subordinate to God, serving God’s purpose in some inscrutable way. Thus in many forms of Jewish **mysticism**, evil is a integral part of creation, a malignant byproduct from the “other side,” or Sitra Achra, of the divine emanation. “Evil is the chair for the good,” as the **Baal Shem Tov** put it, and suffering, misfortune, and **sin** are necessary outcomes of existence. In this argument, even evil entities, such as demons, are really on some level subject to, and agents of, God’s purpose. Thus Chasidic teaching emphasizes that there is no absolute ontological evil. It is common for mystics to call demons “destructive angels” to emphasize that they remain obedient to God in some sense. For this reason, one can read in Jewish literature of demons accepting the authority of and studying **Torah**, adhering to Jewish **law**, and even helping pious sages. It is based on this also that a few Kabbalistic authorities permit a pious adept to summon demons in order to have them perform beneficent services for humanity. At the same time, humans are not permitted to willfully participate in evil through such entities, or bring evil into being.

In concert with such notions of the demonic, Judaism teaches that humanity’s own evil impulse, the Yetzer ha-Ra, serves a critical function in God’s universe and for this reason the Sages teach that humans should not try to destroy or negate our selfish and destructive desires, such as ambition, lust, or revenge (Yoma 69b). Rather, we should sublimate them and harmonize them with God’s intention (Da’at v’Emunah 10). Thus ambition becomes creativity, lust becomes a desire for **marriage** and **children**, and revenge is redirected toward the goal of ensuring justice is done. In interpreting “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a helpmate for him” (Gen. 2:18), the Koretz Rebbe offered this: “There can be no goodness in man while he is alone, without a *Yetzer ha-Ra* within him; I will endow him with the ability to do evil, and it will be as a helpmate to him, to enable him to do good, if he masters the evil nature within him.” *SEE* DEMONS

1. G. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2001), 421.

Evil Eye: (עין הרע/*ayin ha-ra*, also *eina bish*). Literally "eye of evil." The reification of envious desire and ill will. Belief in the evil eye has ancient roots in the Near East and extends across many cultures. It has been the most widely accepted notion of **witchcraft** to be found in Jewish societies across time and geography. The effects of the evil eye include illness, misfortune, and even **Death**. In all cases, believers regard those subjected to its attention to be vulnerable to harmful forces both natural and supernatural.

Readers both ancient and modern have attempted to locate the evil eye in biblical literature. The construct phrase "eye of evil" appears in the books of Deuteronomy (15:9, 28:54, 56) and Proverbs (23:6, 28:22). In each case it serves as an idiom for "stingy" or "parsimonious."

More connotatively, "eyes" and "seeing" serve as a literary motif for feelings of jealousy. Rhetoric of looking appears in passages describing the rivalries between Sara and Hagar (Gen 17:4–5; 21:9) and between **Saul** and David (I Sam 18:9). In a more overtly magical context, the antagonistic King Balak and his wizard-for-hire Balaam each in turn "see" and gaze upon the people Israel (Num. 22–23). The leitmotif reaches its apotheosis in the sorcerer's unintentional blessing, "No harm is in sight for Jacob/No woe in view for Israel" (Num. 23:21).

None of these examples point to a belief in the witchcraft eye among Israelites. In all cases, the "eye evil" in TaNaKH is a synecdoche for greed, jealousy, and angry people. The "eye" has no life of its own apart from the human viewer. Whether this absence from biblical literature is attributable to the absence of the belief in Israelite society or to editorial censorship is a matter of continuing debate.

By late antiquity the belief in a supernatural malevolent gaze had thoroughly permeated Jewish communities. The ayin ha-ra as spiritual phenomenon is repeatedly discussed across the tractates of the **Talmud**, both with and without a biblical context. Some passages assume it is inflicted unintentionally (B.M. 84b). Others indicate it is deliberate witchcraft. At times, the *ayin ha-ra* is characterized as an independent demonic force, seeking its own victims. Most intriguing, several passages regard it to be a power the righteous can wield to just ends (Shab. 33b–34a; B.M. 58a; B.B. 75a). The Rabbis believe there is no end to its malicious power. One Sage goes so far as to say, "Ninety-nine perish by the evil eye; only one by natural causes" (B.B. 107b).

Seen as pervasive in their own time, the Sages assumed the *ayin ha-ra* would have a role in the lives of the biblical worthies and their antagonists. The midrashim introduce the *ayin ha-ra* into many stories in the TaNaKH. The eye is used as a weapon in the rivalry between Sara and Hagar (Gen. R. 53). Fear of attracting its attention inspires Jacob to instruct his children to each enter a city by a different gate (Gen. R. 91.6).

A debate appears in the Talmud (Sot. 36b) over Joshua's instruction to the Joseph tribes to settle in a forest (Josh 17:15). One Sage theorizes this was done to conceal their prosperity from the eye, but he is refuted by others who, citing Genesis 49:22, insist **Joseph** and his descendants are immune from its baneful gaze. The proof text proffered in this pericope is derived from a wordplay on Jacob's dying blessing to his son. It plays a key role in shaping the Jewish *ayin ha-ra* tradition. Characteristic of midrashic discourse, this "Josephite immunity" is derived from a philological "occasion," a linguistic ambiguity in 49:22. First, the word *ayin* means both "spring" and "eye." The second ambiguity is the question regarding the word before *ayin*. Centuries after the Rabbis, the Masorites would vocalize this key word as a preposition, *alei:* "Joseph; a fruitful bough *upon* a spring." But by reading it vocalized as *ole*, it reveals a different message: "Joseph; a fruitful bough [that] *transcends* [the] eye." This only slightly more fanciful reading is reiterated frequently in rabbinic sources (*Ber* 20a, 55b; B.M. 84a) and over the centuries beyond, earning it a central place in Jewish efforts to neutralize the eye's power.

Yet even this late in antiquity, the term "evil eye" does not always carry a supernatural connotation, as evidenced by a passage from Tractate *Pirke* Avot, "Rabbi Yehoshua said: An evil eye, the evil inclination, and hatred of others remove a person from the world" (2:16). From the context it is clear that "evil eye" has a strictly psychological connotation here.

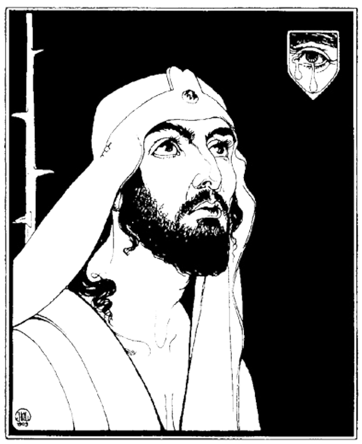
The 17th-century work Nishmat Chayyim 3:27 claims there are three sources of the evil eye:

1. Intense attention from others.
2. It is projected by another with evil intent (witchcraft).
3. It is triggered by the jealousy of demons.

Inspired by Talmudic and popular concern with the *ayin ha-ra*, both later midrashim and the systematic exegetes identify its presence at work in numerous biblical passages. Of all the commentators, the French exegete **RaSHI** gives the most attention to the *ayin ha-ra*, but he is largely content to repeat and amplify

rabbinic exegesis on the eye in the Abraham and Joseph cycles (Gen 16:5; 42:5), in the Balaam saga (Num. 24:2), and in the conflict between David and Saul (I Sam 18:9). Yet occasionally he finds the eye present in previously overlooked narratives of the TaNaKH. The chief example is his comment that the plague that followed David's census was a manifestation of the eye, for "… the evil eye rules over counting" (Comment to Ex 30:11, c.f. I Sam 24:1). This idea took deep roots in Jewish consciousness, creating an aversion to counting people that persists into contemporary times.

The theme of counting related to the eye is further explored the **Zohar** (Zohar II:105a), though, all in all, the *ayin ha-ra* it is not a significant topic in the major works of theosophical **Kabbalah**. References more commonly appear in **Hebrew** magical literature of the period, such as *Sefer ha-Raziel* and *Havdalah de-Rabbi Akiba*.



Supernatural eye by E. M. Lilien

By the close of the medieval period, concerns about the evil eye even come to have a minor role in shaping Jewish law. The Babylonian Talmud (B.M. 59b) discourages using what we would describe as supernatural or paranormal phenomena as a rationale for determining the *Halakhah* (literally, "the way to go"). Yet in later legal digests, concern over the effects of the *ayin ha-ra* become a factor in determining what is permitted and prohibited. This is especially true in the influential law digest Shulchan Aruch of Joseph Caro (16th century). In section *Yoreh Deah* 249:1, for example, the minimum amount of charitable donations is specified in order to avoid creating an evil eye.

In another section, *Choshen Mishpat* 378:5, a Jew is prohibited from admiring a neighbor's farm crop for the same reason. Other examples of behavior prohibited out of concern for the *ayin ha-ra* appear in sections *Orach Chayyim* 141:6, 154:3, 305:11; *Even ha-Ezer* 63:3; and *Yoreh Deah* 265:5. It is notable

that these rules focus entirely on preventing the unintentional generation of this witchcraft. Still, at no point is the phenomenon in any way criminalized. Medieval authorities never propose a legal proceeding related to an evil eye. Neither is any punishment laid out for an identified perpetrator.

Concern over the evil eye has persisted well into the modern era, particularly among Jewish communities that valorize Jewish tradition *en toto*, or remain at odds with modernity, such as the North African Mekubbalim (mystics) and the European Hasidic movement. Early modern works like *Nishmat Chayyim*, by the distinguished Sefardic writer Manasseh ben Israel (18th century), and *Sichos MohaRan*, attributed to Hasidic master Nachman of Bratzlav (19th century), continue to regard the threat of the eye with utmost seriousness.

Jews have used folk remedies (**segulot**), rituals (*ma'asim*), and **amulets** (*kemiyiot*) to defend against the malevolent effects of the *ayin ha-ra*. Biblical divine names, angelic names, and select biblical texts have been prominent tools in waging this fight. The verses are often chosen because of their semantic content (Ex. 15:6; Num. 6:24–27, 21:17; Pss. 46:8, 12, 91:5–6), while others have been singled out based on magical criteria unrelated at all to the meaning (Num. 21:17–20). One custom requires the use of verses that begin and end with the **Hebrew** letter *nun*, such as Psalms 46:5, 77:5, and 78:2. Another biblical text singled out as a resource against the evil eye is the "Priestly Blessing" (Num. 6:24–27; Num. R. 12.4; PR 5).

The complex reasoning behind the choice of an apotropaic verse can be illustrated by examining yet another popular passage from **Jacob**'s blessing, Genesis 48:16 (MT): "May the angel who has redeemed me from all harm—bless the lad … And may they be teeming multitudes upon the earth" (NJV). This verse is regarded as potent against the *ayin ha-ra* because of its perceived two-fold power. Clearly, it calls for angelic protection upon the Children of Israel. But it simultaneously bears an added esoteric association. The phrase, *va-yidgu larov*, "may they be teeming multitudes …" literally means, "may they multiple as fishes …" The Talmud seizes upon this, "Just as **fish** in the sea are covered by **water** so that the evil eye does not rule over them, so too the seed of Joseph is not subject the rule of the evil eye" (Sot. 36b). This interpretation makes the verse doubly efficacious. This may also be the rationale for selecting verses framed by the letter *nun*—*nun* is the Aramaic word for "fish."

Amulets produced by Central Asian (*MiZRaCH*) Jews often begin with Psalm 16:8. Angels, both those named in the TaNaKH and others appearing in post-biblical traditions, are commonplace. Some verses are employed because they

mention a powerful and virtuous biblical figure regarded to have power over the eye, such as Serach bat Asher (Num. 26:46). Again, verses relating to Joseph are among the most often used for their presumed apotropaic power. Some charm writers thought it enough to only allude to the **Patriarch**. Many amulets quote Berachot 55b, "I am the seed of Joseph the Righteous, who is not subject to the evil eye." It is worth noting this is a claim all but impossible to determine by the medieval period; evidently the **evil eye** is not so perceptive in matters of lineage. Others simply read, "Joseph."

Of the many gestures and ritualized behaviors Jews have employed over the centuries to fend off the *ayin ha-ra*, one of the most persistent is the custom of spitting three times. Jews expectorating as a means of exorcism is ancient, and might provide some insight on interpreting the Christian Scriptures, specifically Jesus's use of spit in his performances of spiritual **healing** (Mark 8; John 9). Another gesture is forming the "fig," interlocking one's hands by gripping the thumbs in the palms of the opposite hands.

Evil Inclination: *SEE* YETZER HA-RA.

Exile: (גולה/*G'ulah,* also *Galut*). The two-fold theme of exile and return is *the* master **myth** of Jewish thought. The idea that the individual Jew, the Jewish people, and humanity at large, is alienated from its proper place, is a pattern that reiterates itself on the personal, national, and cosmic level throughout Judaism. The issue of exile plays out in Jewish history, myth, and mystical speculation.[1]

It is a recurring topos throughout the narratives of the Hebrew **Bible**, from the expulsion out of **Eden**, through the loss and restoration to the **Land of Israel**, to the messianic promise of return and renewal predicted by the **Prophets**.

Rabbinic literature continues and amplifies the topics of exile found in the Bible, adding additional dimensions. The most significant of these is the myth of the exile of the **Shekhinah** from the **Temple** on Mount Zion. In the absence of its normal abode, it follows **Israel** into its national exile, "Every place that Israel is exiled, the Shekhinah, as it were, was exiled with them." (MdRI Shirata 3:67–73). It will only return when the people are ingathered to their land (*S of S R.* 4.8).

In Kabbalist thought, the Shekhinah is not merely exiled from its sanctuary, but is actually exiled from the other aspects of the **Pleroma**, or the higher **sefirot** (Zohar II:9a–11b).



The Afflictions of Exile *by E. M. Lilien*

The Belz Rebbe, Yehoshua Rokeach, giving the concept a psychological cast, identified three kinds of exile:

1. Among the **nations**
2. From other Jews
3. From the self

The Ger Rebbe, Yehudah Lieb, taught that exile contains redemption as a seed contains a plant (*Sefat Emet*). Consequently, the quest for, and experience of redemption and restoration is the great existential project that extends from the individual, through the world, to the very person and structure of God. *SEE* ESCHATOLOGY; EXODUS..

1. R. Elior, “Exile and Redemption in Jewish Mystical Thought,” *Studies in Spirituality* 14 (2004): 1–15.

Exodus: (יציאת מצרים). The biblical account of the flight of the Israelites from **Egypt** found in the book of Exodus is full of fabulous elements: the confrontation between **Moses** and the Egyptian magicians, turning staves into serpents, the ten **plagues**, the parting of the Red Sea, and the **pillars** of **fire** and **cloud** that led and guarded the Israelites. Rabbinic literature elaborates upon these, with Rabbi Akiba going so far as to demonstrate homiletically that there were not just ten, but really 250 plagues (the Haggadah). There are also stories of God’s interventions to protect the Israelite people against the worst Egyptian abuses during their slavery; when **Pharaoh** ordered the massacre of the Israelite boys, **Angels** stood in the midst of the Nile and caught the infants being cast in (*S of S R.* 2:15; Ex. R. 23:8). Angels also shielded the child **Moses** until he could

mature into the deliverer of the people. When Pharaoh refused him an audience, Moses was teleported into the **palace**. The Exodus as a historical event, so central to biblical and rabbinic thought, plays a remarkably small role in the kabbalistic sources, which are much more engaged by the problem of **exile** as a cosmological condition, of which the Exodus was merely a symptom. *SEE* PASSOVER

Exorcism: (גרוש/*Gerush*, also *ha-Shavuat ruchot; Cherem; Reigash Shedim*). A **ritual** of power performed in order to drive an evil spirit from a possessed person, location, or object. Over the centuries, Jewish tradition has manifest two distinct **possession** traditions: **demonic possession** and **spiritual [ghostly] possession**. Demonic possession dominated the Jewish imagination from antiquity into the Middle Ages, but changes in Jewish theology with the advent of **Kabbalah**, particularly the rising belief in **reincarnation**, has meant that belief in possession by dead spirits has largely superseded the earlier traditions, and even the most traditional Jews no longer take demon possession seriously. With regards to the process of exorcism, techniques for dealing with either kind of possession significantly overlap, and there are few hard and fast distinctions that can be made between them. The earliest accounts, those prior to the Middle Ages, however are often unclear on the nature of the spiritual attack—is the attack coming in the form of an entity in possession of the victim's **Body**, or a haunting? For the purposes of this entry, this question will be left open, and instead it examines the issue of getting the attack to cease.

The *locus classicus* for exorcism in Judaism appears in the **Bible**, in the youth narratives of **David** (1 Sam. 16:14–23). But while the biblical David seemed to be able to effect a temporary relief for **Saul** from his evil spirit by the use of **music**, it is not until the post-biblical book of Tobit, which is not part of the Jewish canon, one finds the first explicit and detailed description of an exorcism (6:8–17; 8:1–3). Other "outside" sources include Jubilees (10:3–6); Josephus, who reports incidents of possession and exorcism in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (2, 6, 8, 45–48), and the Christian New Testament, which reports **Jesus** to have performed numerous exorcisms of demonic spirits in 1st-century Palestine (Matt. 12; Mark 5, 6, 13; Luke 8).[1] Patristic Fathers of early **Christianity**, Justin Martyr and Origen, credit Jews with a special talent for exorcising demons (*Trypho* 85:3; *Against Celsus* book 4).

Gideon Bohak divides the methods of exorcism in the Greco-Roman world into three types: expulsion using **animal**, mineral, or vegetable substances, often noxious in nature (Tobit; PdRK 4); the charismatic holy power of the exorcist

(Simon bar Yochai, Chanina ben Dosa, Jesus of Nazareth); exorcism via technique using **incantations**, scriptural verse, and ritual performance, usually by a physician or other “professional” (we should include **Solomon** under this category).[2]

The **Dead Sea Scrolls** include several exorcism incantations and formulae, mostly directed against **disease**-causing demons. In particular there is the collection of “four songs for the charming the afflicted with **music**,” fragmentary exorcism **psalms** that may have been attributed to David (the partial nature of the texts prevents us from knowing for sure) (4Q510–511; 11Q11). Another potential expulsion text is the highly damaged 4Q560 (4Qexorcism ar.):

> and to the heart, as […] and you gave birth to rebellion, begotten (through) the visitation of evil […] he who enters the flesh, the male penetrator and the female penetrator […] iniquity and guilt, fire and frost, and the heat of the heart […] in sleep, he who crushes the male and she who passes through the female, those who dig […] the wicked […] before him and[…] And I, to the spirit of oath […] I enchant you, spirit […] and the earth and the clouds […] [3]

A fragment of Genesis Apocryphon recounts how **Abraham** exorcised the Pharaoh of Genesis 12:17 (1QapGen 20). The anonymous work *Antiquities of the Bible* includes the psalm David supposedly recited over Saul (60). People who fell under the influence of false prophets and mediums were thought to also require the exorcism of possessing evil spirits (the false prophets and mediums themselves were subject to **Death**, a sure cure for most possessions, see Zechariah 13).

The **Talmud** and **Midrash** mention exorcisms, though at times in a tongue-in-cheek manner (PdRK 1:4, Num. R. 19.8). An extended story in Leviticus Rabbah 24:3 tells of the exorcism of a **well** of **water** involving **iron** implements and shouted formulae. Simon bar Yochai exorcises a demon, a demonstration that assists him in getting the cooperation of Caesar in lifting an oppressive decree against the Jews (*Me’ilah* 17b). In a medieval Midrash, Chanina ben Dosa is credited with exorcising an evil spirit haunting an old woman, as well as taming the demon queen **Igrat** (Pes. 112b). Intriguingly, in these accounts, the Sages exorcise demons, even though each of the evil spirits actually behaved in an apparently beneficial fashion.[4]

The methods used in exorcisms vary over time, and according to the nature of the spiritual attack. The Bible provides one frequently used text which has been

used across time as a liturgy of exorcism, Psalm 91, the “psalm of the afflicted [by spirits]” (P. Shab. 6.2; Shev. 15b):

> You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, say to Adonai, “My refuge and fortress, my God in whom I trust.” God will rescue you from the fowler’s snare, from the destroying plague, will shelter you with pinions, spread wings that you may take refuge; God’s faithfulness is a protecting shield. You shall not fear the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that roams in darkness, nor the plague that ravages at noon. Though a thousand fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, near you it shall not come. You need simply watch; the punishment of the wicked you will see. You have Adonai for your refuge; you have made the Most High your stronghold. No evil shall befall you, no affliction come near your tent. For God commands the angels to guard you in all your ways. With their hands they shall support you, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the asp and the viper, trample the lion and the dragon. Whoever clings to me I will deliver; whoever knows my name I will set on high. All who call upon me I will answer; I will be with them in distress; I will deliver them and give them honor. With length of days I will satisfy them and show them my saving power.

Other biblical texts often used in exorcism formulae are Psalms 10, 16, 121 and Numbers 6:4–7. (*SEE* Shimmush Tehillim).

Incantation bowls and **amulets** have been recovered that contain various anti-demonic formulae. Many of these are preventative and apotropaic in their orientation, but several contain incantations directed toward expelling spirits of illness, such as a adjuration inscribed on a silver plate.[5] Perhaps the most piquant example of an exorcism text among these is this one seems to be aimed at expelling succubae, incubi, and illness-causing spirits by invoking the rhetoric of Jewish divorce:

> Be informed herewith that Rabbi Joshua bar Perachia has sent the ban against you … A divorce-writ has come down to us from Heaven, and therein is found written your advisement and your intimidation, in the name of Palsa-Pelisa [“Divorcer-Divorced”], who renders to thee thy divorce and thy separation … Thou, Lilith, male Lili and female Lilith, Hag and Snatcher, be under the ban … A divorce-writ has come for you from across the sea … Hear it and depart from the house and dwelling of this Geyonai bar Mamai,

> and from Rashnoi his wife, the daughter of Marath. You shall not again appear to them, either in a dream by night or in slumber by day, because you are sealed with the signet of El-Shaddai … [This is] Your divorce and writ and letter of separation … Amen, Amen, Selah, Halleluyah! [6]

By the high medieval period, a considerable body of exorcism texts had accumulated. This is an example taken from Shoshan Yesod ha-Olam, a 16th-century CE collection of rituals:

> [t]o remove a demon from the body of a man or woman, or anything into which a male or female demon has entered … Take an empty flask and a white waxen candle and recite this adjuration in purity … I adjure you, the pure and holy angels Michael, Gabriel, Shuviel, Ahadriel, Zumtiel, Yechutriel, Zumtziel … by 72 names I adjure you, you all the retinues of [evil] spirits in the world … that you bring forth that demon immediately and do not detain the mazzik [destructive spirit] of so-and-so, and tell me his name in this circle that I have drawn in your honor … Immediately they will tell you his name and the name of the father and the name of his mother aloud [demons procreate—Chag. 16a, Eruv. 18, AbbS]; do not fear …
>
> I adjure you the demon so-and-so … that you now enter this flask immediately and immediately the flask will turn red [the author reports that bottling up the spirit was commonplace, familiar to western readers through the Islamic Djinn tradition].[7]

Many exorcisms preserved in written accounts were public events, either performed in a **synagogue**, or at least requiring the presence of a minyan, a minimum of ten men that normally makes up a **ritual** quorum (*Nishmat Chayyim* 3; *Divrei Yosef*). Various somatic symptoms (swellings, paralysis, markings, and bodily sensations) were sought in the victim for diagnostic purposes (*Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*). Most techniques include interviewing the demon and/or dybbuk, taking a personal history, as it were, in order to understand what is motivating the spirit and so better effect the removal (*Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah*). Many possessing spirits are evidently quite forthcoming and loquacious. At times cooperation was coerced from the demon by "**fumigation**," exposing it to smoke and sulfur, a sympathetic invocation of the infernal realms (*Igerot ha-Ramaz*). The goal of the interview is to eventually learn the name of the evil spirit.

Key to later Jewish exorcism would be having a charismatic religious personality, an abba, **Baal Shem**, **rebbe**, or a rabbi, conduct the ceremony. This is in contrast with earlier Mesopotamian and Greco-Roman practices, which,

often as not, use a physician. The process usually starts with the exorcist ritually purifying himself, either according to traditional Jewish practice, or by special means, such as anointing himself with **water** and **oil**. Some exorcists may invoke the presence of a **maggid**, or beneficent spirit, to assist them.

The exorcist then uses the power of the demonic or dead spirit's own name to "overpower" it, by round after round of scripted **ritual** actions involving threats and rebukes, getting more intense and invasive with each effort. A few ceremonies on record reached the point of actually "beating" the demon out, but most simply involved verbal coercion.[8]

Jewish exorcisms are usually "liturgical," using protective verses such as were shown above. Sefer ha-Gilgulim instructs the patient to recite Psalms 20, 90, and Ana B'choach, an acrostic **Prayer** made from a **name of God**. Rituals accompanying the recitations can include the ever-popular fumigation, sounding a shofar or the use of other Jewish objects, such as **Candles**, Torah scrolls, kvittles, **tefillin**, or lamps (*Sha'ar Ruach ha-Kodesh* 89; *Ma'aseh shel Ruach be-Kehillah*). Beginning in the early modern era, exorcism reports include the use of amulets (*Minchat Yehudah* 47a).

According to Lurianic **Kabbalah**, exorcism of a possessing dybbuk involves the **Tikkun**, or "repair" of the ghostly **Soul**. The tzadik/exorcist accomplishes this by promising the dybbuk salvation, then extracting all its goodness, restoring those resources to the root soul or Treasury of Souls, until the estranged evil consciousness withers and is annihilated. Thus the Lurianic Kabbalist is acting on behalf of both the victim and the dybbuk. The primary sign of a successful exorcism was a bloody fingernail or toenail, the point by which the dybbuk enters and leaves the **Body**. Occasionally there are reports of spirits violently leaving through the throat, vagina, or rectum. A sudden and dramatic change in the victim's behavior is also a sure sign of recovery (*Igerot ha-Ramaz* 24b). Interestingly, Jewish exorcisms occasionally fail, as shown in these excerpts from a famous exorcism performed in Safed:

> I was amidst the great gathering, for there were over one hundred people there, Torah scholars and heads of communities. Two men, who knew the adjurations and many matters, approached the [possessed] woman so that the spirit within the woman would speak, by means of the smoke of fire and sulfur that they would make enter her nostrils … by means of the adjurers the voice would begin to be heard … they would quarrel with him … "What is your name, evil one?" He would respond "Samuel Tzarfati." They asked him, "For which matter do you reincarnate in the world in reincarnation such as

these?" He responded, "For many sins I have committed in my life …" They also would petition for mercy upon him [the dybbuk], and pray for him, and blow the shofar … They pressed him with the aforementioned adjurations, and with the aforementioned smoke, and with the [Divine] Names, that the spirit should depart through the big nail of one of her feet … so it was done … [nonetheless, the spirit manifests itself again in a matter of days and the poor woman died eight days later].[9]

Apparently, reports of misadventures are virtually non-existent in Catholic tradition. Jews, as always, are highly self-critical.

As the number of exorcism reports proliferate, so too the prominent Jews who gain reputations as exorcists—**Isaac Luria**, **Chayyim Vital** , Isaiah Horowitz, and Chafetz Chayyim all become recognized for this skill. In a related tradition, it is believed righteous individuals have the power to gather up lost souls who are trapped in this world and release them so they may continue their journey into the afterlife. Figures such as the **Baal Shem Tov**, Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav, and Rabbi Chayyim ben Attar were famous for doing this. Reports of exorcisms continue to come out of traditional communities both in the United States and Israel, though there has been a marked decline in the number over the past century. *SEE* DEMONS; GHOST; POSSESSION, DEMONIC; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY; WOMEN..

1. G. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993).
2. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magi*c, 88–89, 101.
3. Martinez, *the Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 378.
4. M. Bar-Ilan, "Exorcism by Rabbis: Talmud Sages and Their Magic," *Bar-Ilan University Online Articles*, http://faculty.biu.ac.il/~barilm/exorcism.html, 1–9.
5. Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 93.
6. R. Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 226.
7. Chajes, *Between Worlds*, 67.
8. Ibid., 57–96.
9. Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judaism*, 367–381.

Expanse: ([yqr/*Rakia*). One of the seven levels of **heaven**. It is the level that holds all the celestial bodies: **moon**, **sun**, stars, and **planets** (Chag. 12b–13a).

Explanation of the Four-Letter Name: A brief tract on how the **Prophet Jeremiah** used the forty-two-letter **name of God** to construct a **golem** with the help of his son, Sira.

Explicit Name of God, the: (השם/*Ha-Shem;* שם המפורש/*Shem ha-Meforash,* also *Shem Hayah; Shem ha-Miuchad; Shem Kodesh; Shem Shamayim; Shem ben Arba Otiyot*). In most esoteric contexts, the "explicit name" carries the connotation of "the name [of God as it is] fully pronounced," meaning with its correct vowel sounds. Since these vowels never appear in writing, the correct pronunciation of all divine names is transmitted orally, from esoteric master to disciple (Kid. 71b). The term "explicit name" is usually referring to the **Tetragrammaton**, but this is not always the case. In some texts it is also synonymous with other occult **names of God**, such as the forty-two-letter name of God.[1]

1. S. S. Cohen, "The Name of God, a Study in Rabbinic Theology," *HUCA* 23 (1950): 587–92.

Eybeschitz, Jonathan: A 17th–century German rabbi and **amulet** maker. A highly controversial **Baal Shem**, Eybeschitz invoked the power of the false **Messiah** Shabbatai Tzvi in the wording of his amulets, embroiling him in a very public controversy that eventually required the intervention of gentile authorities to protect him.

Eye: (עין/*Ayin*). The eye is a powerful symbol of sight, both normal and paranormal. Depending on the context, the eye can be regarded as a positive or negative force. Naturally a covetous eye is bad and may bring about the malevolent force of the **evil eye**. The **Angel of Death** is covered in eyes, allowing him omniscient sight.

On the other hand, the eye is also a symbol of the all-seeing God of Israel. **Zechariah** had a reassuring **vision** of supernal **menorah** covered in eyes. **chamsa amulets** often feature an eye in the center of the palm, invoking God's constant guardianship.

Ezekiel ben Buzi: The great prophet-priest of the Babylonian **exile** experienced apocalyptic visions and miraculous encounters. His vision of the **merkavah**, the divine **chariot**, is the starting point for all Jewish **mysticism** (Ezek. 1, 10).

In chapter 37, Ezekiel describes his vision of the dry bones. The **Talmud** (Sanh. 92b) relates that this was more than just a vision, that the prophet in fact resurrected six hundred thousand Israelites killed by the Babylonians. Other traditions say he resurrected the Ephraimites who died trying to escape **Egypt** prior to the **Exodus**. After his death, his **burial** place in Kifil, Iraq, became a place of pilgrimage, and many **miracles** are the result of the power of his grave (Sanh. 92b; PdRE 33).

Ezekiel Shem Tov David: (Iraqi-Indian, ca. 19th century). His Judeo-Arabic commentary on the psalms includes a description of each **psalms** theurgic uses, ranging from combating **demons** to treating snakebite.

Ezra, Apocalypse of: *SEE* ESDRAS, THE BOOKS OF.

Ezra, Fourth Book of: This book provides perhaps the most elaborate description of **heaven** and hell found in **apocalyptic literature**. *SEE* ESDRAS, THE BOOKS OF.>

Ezra of Gerona: Kabbalist (Spanish, ca. 13th century). A leading figure among the Gerona mystics, he wrote one of the first explicitly mystical commentaries on the Song of Songs and an explanation of the mystical significance of the **commandments**.

[contents]

F



Face: (פנים). The **Hebrew** terms for face, *panim, p'nei, partzuf,* can also mean "presence," and the term "face" and "face of God" is a frequent idiom for the divine presence. The Lurianic doctrines of the **Partzufim**, the "five [divine] countenances," are the most formal and elaborate development of that concept. Medieval Jewry developed techniques for interpreting character from lines of the forehead and facial features. *SEE* FACE OF GOD; METOPOSCOPY; PHYSIOGNOMY.

Face (or Countenance) of God: (פני אלהים/*Panei Elohim* also *Partzuf*). A metaphor for the divine presence, as expressed in Numbers 6:24–26:

> Adonai bless thee, and keep you.
> Adonai make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.
> Adonai lift up His face upon you, and give you peace.

This passage exemplifies the notion of the "face" as a sign and bearer of beneficent attention. Conversely, the "turning away" or "hiding" of God's face signifies abandonment or loss of providential care (Ezek. 7:22; Ps. 27:9).

There is a tension, beginning in the **Bible** and continuing through Jewish literature, as to whether it is actually possible to "see" God. The Bible itself gives contradictory testimony. In one passage we are informed, "For no man shall see Me and live" (Ex. 33:20). Yet in contrast we are told, "I saw the Eternal sitting upon a throne" (Isa. 6:1), and "So **Jacob** named the place *Peniel* ["face of God"], for he said, 'I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved' " (Gen. 32:20).

Some interpret Exodus 33 to indicate that there are aspects of God that can be apprehended with the senses, just not God's "countenance" (literally, "face"). Exodus 33:14 also offers the possibility that the "countenance" is an angel, rather than a divine feature. This is buttressed by the circumstances of **Jacob's** claim in Genesis 32, yet a passage later in the **Torah** (Deut. 34), describes **Moses** as one who knew God *panim el panim* ("face-to-face").

This tension carries into the post-biblical period; the **Midrash** declares that not even the angels may see God (Num. R. 14:22) and that God sees all things yet is not seen (Mid. Teh. 91:1; Num. R. 12:3). However, **Hechalot** texts indicate that the well-prepared adept can view what is even unseen by the angels who surround God's throne, "the King in His Beauty" (*Hechalot Rabbati*). Some Kabbalistic passages, the circle of mystics convened in esoteric Torah **study** is the means to experience the divine face directly.[1]

Jewish prophetic and mystical texts consequently bequeath to the tradition three types of mystical encounters with God: the aural encounter, involving hearing divine voices; the ineffable encounter, in which there is no sensory comparison to be made; and the visionary encounter, in which God is manifest to the eyes, often in a **dream**. Yet even those who believe in the possibility of the last type still suggest that such manifestations are more a product of **reiyat ha-lev,** "the seeing of the **heart**," of mortal imagination, than an accurate reflection of the appearance of God. The **German Pietist** make the distinction that what is seen is the divine glory, rather than God in essence. This distinction is often described in terms of God's "clothing" and is helpful in making sense of the many detailed yet diverse images of God that appear in both Scripture and mystical literature—the visionary sees only what surrounds God and these "**garments**" are borne of his or her own imagination. What is more, the image chosen is almost always an anthropomorphic one, hence God's "face."

Lurianic **Kabbalah** also describes five divine faces, the **Partzufim**, though these are not visible per se, and they may be something akin to the divine speculum described in other sources. Two of the countenances especially, Arikh Anpin and Zer Anpin, are sometimes described more like "surfaces" that reflect the divine effluence through the channels of the **sefirot**. This is the self-regulating feedback mechanism God builds into creation after the Shevirat ha-Kelim, the collapse of the primordial vessels of light. *SEE* COUNTENANCE, PRINCE OF THE; GLORY; GODHEAD; IMAGE, DIVINE; PLEROMA.; VISION.

1. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 368–377.

Fae: Mischievous fairy creatures mentioned in medieval European Jewish texts. Like the name, the concept is of non-Jewish origin. Jews fuse the tradition of fae being changelings with the rabbinic legend of **Adam**'s sexual dalliance with succubae during a period of separation from **Eve**. *SEE* BANIM SHOVAVIM DEMONS; KESILIM.

Falk, Chayyim Samuel Jacob: Alchemist and magician (Polish-English, ca. 18th century). Known in English as Samuel de Falk, he was also referred to as the **Baal Shem** of London. The Polish-born Falk had to flee Germany because of accusations of **sorcery**. He settled in London in 1742 and was famed as a wonderworker and alchemist. He had a sidekick, Hirsch Kalish, who kept a record of his exploits. *SEE* ALCHEMY.

Fallen Angels: The tradition of a revolt in **heaven** ending in the expulsion or fall of the rebellious angels is a major theme in Greco-Roman Jewish writings.[1] The *locus classicus* for the claim that angels fell, or were expelled, from heaven is Genesis 6:2 and its brief report that divine beings copulated with mortal **women**, producing the primeval giants and superheroes. Psalm 82 also has been interpreted as recounting an angelic expulsion from heaven. The prophetic oracle pronounced against the King of **Babylon** in Isaiah 14, "How you have fallen from heaven, O shining one, son of Dawn!" was also sometimes interpreted to be a reference to an angelic fall.

In apocalyptic works like I Enoch and the Book of Giants, these cryptic passages are expanded with fuller accounts of angelic disobedience and divine punishment. These books also teach that it is from these angels that humanity first learns many occult and impure crafts: **magic**, the lunar calendar, and **astrology** (I Enoch 6, 8, 10; *Jubilees* 4–5). These angels are central to the dualistic theology of the sectarian **priests** of **Qumran** (Community Rule II, III; Damascus Document II; War Scroll XIII; 11Q11).

Because of their expulsion from heaven, these angels become the principal **demons**, thereby offering a rationale for why there are infernal forces at work in a creation that is otherwise regarded to be wholly the work of a beneficent God. The fallen angels most singled out by name are **Samael**, Shemchazi, and Azazel, though **I Enoch** ultimately names eighteen "Princes."



Angel losing his wings
bookplate by E. M. Lilien

While both Christian and Gnostic traditions embrace and elaborate on these stories (Interpreting Isaiah 14 as an account of the fall of Satan, for example, becomes a fixed, almost doctrinal reading), the main stream of Jewish thought preserves, yet marginalizes, the pre-rabbinic notion of fallen angels, though the theme reappears in snippets of Jewish Midrashic and mystical literature (Gen. R. 26; PdRE 22; BhM 5; Yalkut Gen. 44; Zohar I:58a). The majority of commentators, however, interpret the term *b'nai Elohim* that appears in Genesis 6:2 to mean "men of prominence," or "notables" (RaSHI, Nachmanides, and Abarbanel, comments to 6:2). *SEE* ANGEL AND ANGELOLOGY; FLOOD, THE; GIANTS; GIANTS, BOOK OF; SATAN.

1. B. J. Bamberger, *Fallen Angels: Soldiers of Satan's Realm* (Philadelphia, PA: JPS, 1952).

Farbrengen: (פארברענגען). "Gathering." A kind of spiritual-communal rally held by CHaBaD Chasids. Functionally identical to the **rebbe's** tish practiced by other Chasidic groups, the farbrengen features long discourses on mystical teachings of **Torah**, interrupted by chanting, song, and **dance**.[1] The crowd is also loosened up by a liberal supply of liquor present at all such events. The event of a harmonious assembly of Jews is seen as having a metaphysical function, creating

an intercessory moment that curries and cultivates divine favor.

> The power of a farbrengen is in the inner love and affection between Chasidim and is derived from the fact that we all have one Father. This causes pleasure On High through the souls of our righteous rebbes, who devoted their lives to the spiritual and physical well-being of the Chasidim. This in turn causes a threefold blessing of compassion to be bestowed, in the areas of children, health, and livelihood, to any member of the companions who devotes himself to carry out and practice all that our holy rebbes have taught us. (*Igrot Kodesh*, Rayatz 3:411)

It is commonplace for a chasid facing some sort of difficulty to report a favorable change of fortune after attending a farbrengen. *SEE* REBBE.

1. Rabinowicz, *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, 125.

Farfir Lichter: (פאפיר ליכטיער). “Purple/Attractive Light.” A mischievous spirit that misleads nighttime travelers. It can be thwarted by reciting Job 2:2 three times.

Fasting: (תענית, צום). Fasting is a traditional act of penitence, as well as being a method of spiritual **purification**, in both religious and magical rites (Ex. 34; 1 Sam. 28). The **Talmud** states, that fasting is sinful yet those who fast are called “holy ones” (Tan. 11a–b).

In all its applications, it functions as kind of existential **sacrifices**, offering a part (usually characterized as one’s “fat and blood”) of the self up to God (Ber. 17a; Zohar II:20b, 153a). **Solomon** fasted in order that God would grant him exceptional **wisdom** (Mid. Mish. 1:1). During Talmudic times, whole communities would undertake fasting for **rain**—an entire tractate of the Talmud, Ta’anit, is devoted to the issue. Sages would fast in order to be granted better retention of the **Torah** lessons they learned (B.M. 85a). Fasting was also a spiritual preparation for performing mystical **ascent** (*Otzer ha-Geonim* 4). Fasting is regarded as a remedy for a range of **evil** omens and supernatural threats, such as bad **dreams** or dropping a **Bible**. **Isaac Luria** advocated fasting as a tool of *tikkunei avonot*, "rectifying transgressions," for minor offenses against the **Partzufim** (*Sha’ar Ruach ha-Kodesh* 40–60). Since it is most associated with negative circumstances, fasting before a joyous occasion, such as a **Wedding**, is practiced as a way to deceive the **evil eye** (Shab. 21b; Tan. 8b, 10b).

Fat: (שמן). Animal fat was a featured part of the offerings made to God in the sacrificial cult. Later kabbalistic writing argues that the **blood** and fat forbidden by **Torah** is "divine **food**," possessing more supernal qualities than the other things humans consume (Zohar II:62a; *Or Yakar*). After the sacrificial services ended, fat continued to have a role in the making of medicines, potions, and magical formulae (ShR). Unlike their Christian and pagan counterparts, Jewish magicians avoided the use of human fats in potions and remedies, both because of issues of ritual **purity** and because of Jewish attitudes toward the respectful treatment of corpses.

Fate: (גורל/*Goral,* also *Mazzal; Hashgacha; Te'udah*; Yiddish: *Bashert*). While belief in free will is the bedrock of Judaism (Deut. 30), various fatalistic beliefs are found in Jewish tradition. The belief that there is a person one is destined to marry is one example (*Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* 8). Belief that poverty or prosperity is fated to certain people is another. A general belief in providence, both general and individual, is evident throughout Jewish thought. Humans, however, have the power to change their doom. Thus in the High Holiday liturgy it is declared that God records "who will live and who will die" each Rosh Hashanah in the **Book of Life**, but also it affirms that "**Prayer**, repentance, and **charity** avert the severe decree." Rabbi Akiba expresses it as a **paradox**: "All is foreseen, yet free will is given" (Avot 3:15).

Belief in fate is also evident in Jewish thought through **astrology**, and even the Talmudic Sages occasionally remark that the stars determine some human circumstances. And as for the ultimate form of fate, **Death**, the fundamental belief that there is a universal doom attached to being mortal is implicit in all Jewish thought—but even this destiny is undermined, or at least mitigated, by the possibility of eternal life. (M.K. 28a; Tan. 25a; Suk. 53a; Meg. 25a; *Nidd.* 16b).

The **priests** who authored some of **apocalyptic literature** and, especially, the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, had a particularly fatalistic worldview. They spoke of *te'udah*, of preordained heavenly statutes that not only determined the cycles of the seasons and the order of **nature**, but also determined history (Thanksgiving Hymns, XII). Two millennia later, the Chasidic master Mordecai Joseph of Izbeca also claimed humans have little or no control over their own actions or what befalls them.[1] *SEE* FREE WILL.

1. Rabinowicz, *Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, 134.

Feminine, Divine: Despite a long-standing perception, largely shaped by the rationalist (and andro-centric) traditions of Judaism, the idea that God possesses or participates in feminine attributes, is a belief that goes back to biblical times. Archeology in the **Land of Israel** has clearly established that, at least for some Israelites, YHVH was the male aspect of a divine *syzygy* (complimentary forces) that included a female consort. Iron Age inscriptions (graffiti, really) found at Khirbet el Qom and Kuntillet Arjud, contain phrases like "Yahweh of Teman … his asherah" and "Yahweh of Samaria and his asherah." The structure of these phrases clearly makes the "asherah" the possession of YHVH. The most conclusive is that "asherah" in this context is not a proper name. Some therefore posit this means that it is a cultic object, like a sacred [totem] pole. But "l'ashrt" may actually mean "His consort," a subordinate female divine force, complimentary to, but not on par with, the God of Israel. P. D. Miller alternatively suggests that "asherah" is actually the hypostatized female aspect of the God of Israel.[1] Crude graffiti that accompanies one of these inscriptions showing two similar figures, a larger and a smaller, is suggestive in this regard. Asherah worship existed, for at least a while, in the highest royal circles, see 1 Kings 15:13 and 2 Chronicles 15:16. Some passages suggest it to be the norm, rather than the exception: 2 Kings 18:4, 21:7, 23:4–6. The **Prophets** spend a good part of their oratory reproaching their fellow Israelites for both their worship of other gods and their chronic failure to serve YHVH correctly.

In fact, the prophets never actually discard the notion of God having a feminine consort. They simply displace it by declaring the collectivity of Israel, it's "spirit" as it were, to be the true Bride of God (Jer. 2:2; Hos. 12; Ezek. 16).

Post biblically, the Sages speak of similar notions in somewhat different terms. Elaborating on the biblical notion of divine Kavod residing in the **Temple** and among the people (Zech. 2), they begin to speak of "God's Presence," a divine aspect that never departs from Israel, rests with it whenever it is gathered in kinship, watches over the sick, remains with Israel even in its failings, even going into **exile** along with the people (Sanh. 39a; Ber. 6a; Shab. 12b; Yoma 56b; Meg. 29a). This presence is usually termed the Shekhinah ("Dwelling"), a feminine noun. This Presence is even described parabolically as a woman. One can also see a distinctly maternal imagery in some of the dynamics between her and Israel. While not usually understood as the "spirit" of the Jewish people per se (She is more akin to the Greek notion of *Parousia* or the Christian concept of the "Holy Ghost"); in places she is in fact equated with the people by being called Knesset Yisrael ("Assemblage of Israel"). She is at times linked to another

feminine hypostatic entity, the **Torah**. When Israel studies Torah, it draws the Shekhinah closer.

A shift in thinking about the meaning of Shekhinah and its relationship to the Godhead starts to emerge in the Middle Ages. In *Bereshit Rabbah*, an early **Midrash**, for the first time we see an expression that clearly distinguishes between God and Shekhinah:

The Holy Blessed One … He withdrew Himself and His Shekhinah …[2]

The Spanish Kabbalists go further, reviving the theme of the divine feminine in a way not seen since those early biblical times. But rather than placing a female deity next to the God of Israel, the mystics expound on the male and female forces within God (a kind of di-theism or di-ity).[3] Thus traditional terms for God with some "masculine" connotation, such as ha-Kodesh Barukh Hu (the Holy One, Blessed be He) signifies the masculine side of God, while Shekhinah comes to represent the feminine side of God. These two polarities are harmonized via a constant and dynamic process of *heiros gamos*, of intra-divine union.

In the Kabbalistic model of the **sefirot** there are a cascading series of complimentary male and female structures: Chochmah and Binah, **Chesed** and Gevurah, Netzach and Hod, and, closest to material existence, Yesod and **Malchut**.

In the **Zohar**, the Shekhinah is central. No other aspect of the sefirot receives the level of interpretive energy this feminine entity does. The Zohar even uses the term *Metrona* or *Metronit (*"Lady"). Higher (and more abstract) in the divine order is Binah, the "mother" of all. It is her, with her male counterpart Chochmah, which "births" all the structures of positive existence.

In some parts of the Zohar, the notion of **Partzufim** ("[Divine] Countenances") is further developed by Moses Cordovero and **Isaac Luria**. Chief of these "divine faces" is Ima, the supernal "Mother," which corresponds a little ambiguously, even confusingly, with the Zoharic role of Binah.

Thus the divine feminine is embedded if both abstract notion of generativity and more intimate motifs of lover, mother, and caretaker.

1. P. D. Miller, "The Absence of the Goddess in Israelite Religion," *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986), 239–248.
2. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), 64.
3. Idel, *Kabblah and Eros*, 66–67.

Fertility: Fertility, both agricultural and human, was a major concern of all peoples of the ancient Near East. Pagan religions universally featured fertility

rites and rituals. Fertility-related gods, such as **Baal**, enjoyed special prominence. In Israelite religion, YHVH is the guarantor of life and its continuation. Though the **Earth** is rendered less fertile by the transgressions of primeval man (Gen. 3), the earth retains its fundamental capacity to be fruitful. Human barrenness and fertility is a recurrent theme throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Much of the **Abraham** saga, for example, can be read as telling of YHVH's fulfillment of the promise to make the barren Abraham and **Sarah**, and all their progeny after them, a wellspring of fecundity (Gen. 15, 22). The need to have a child has had such a grip on the Jewish mind that childless men in the early Middle Ages would engage in a legal fiction of symbolically "purchasing" a child from another family (without actually adopting the child) in order to avoid any divine opprobrium arising from not fulfilling the mitzvah of being "fruitful and multiplying." Later authorities would accept that formal adoption in the sense we think of it today fulfills the obligation to procreate (SA Even ha-Ezer 1; *Chochmat Shlomo* ad loc.).

Thus, despite this guarantee of fertility to the Jewish people, the use of **amulet**s, **incantations**, and fertility symbols have been widespread. Specific foods and **herbs**, such as eggs, fish, milk, and garlic, are considered aphrodisiacs or sources of potency. Medieval Jewish tradition includes many examples of theurgic rituals, primarily name **magic** involving **Angels**, **astrology** , and the **zodiac**, for ensuring the fertility of people, of agricultural lands, and of cattle. Numerous medieval texts provide **love** incantations and recipes for love potions. Chief among the arsenal of folk cures, rituals, and devices to combat prolonged bouts of infertility include:

- Mandrakes, which have a biblical warrant (Gen. 30:14–16). This root is incorporated into varied cures across the centuries.
- Consuming rubies appears as a treatment in medieval medical texts.[1]
- Visiting the grave of **Rachel** outside Bethlehem, to ask for the **Matriarchs** intervention. The **burial** places of other deceased worthies, such as Hasidic masters, are also sought out.
- Mizrachi (Asian) Jews would place a cup of **water** under the chair set out for Elijah at a **circumcision** ceremony (*brit milah*). Following the ceremony, barren women would drink this water in hope of aiding in pregnancy. A related practice would be to drink from a Kiddush cup that had just been used at a *brit milah*. In Europe, women would meditate upon the knife used to perform a circumcision. All this was inspired by the hope that the fertility

embodied in the newborn boy that permeated the ritual would prove contagious.[2]

• The exact reverse of this association, and one probably adopted from surrounding gentile cultures, involved having a woman stand in close proximity to a corpse, or sprinkle themselves with the water used to purify a corpse (European gentile women would stand under a gallows or even a hanging criminal).

• Incantations and *kemiyiot* (amulets) were common and widely circulated. Most amulets included verses from Scripture that promise to counter barrenness (Isa. 30:19, for example, or Ex. 23:26).[3]

• Most startling is a practice forbidden by the rabbis, but nevertheless reported in several communities—infertile women consuming the foreskin tissue from a circumcision (perhaps not so weird if we think of the occasional modern practice of women eating the afterbirth, but still shocking). Not surprisingly, *keeping* the foreskin as a talisman was more common.[4]

The mystical **sex** manual, Igeret ha-Kodesh, emphasizes that time of day, state of **purity**, state of mind, and even the orientation of the bed (a kind of Jewish tantric feng shui) have an influence over fertility. A major focus of the miraculous powers of Baal Shems has been their gifts for overcoming infertility, usually through the method of **segulot**.

The Jewish holiday most intimately engaged with themes of fertility is Sukkot, with its **Prayers** for **rain**, the waving of the lulav, the four species, and the (now defunct) water libation ritual.

In the **World to Come**, the hyper-fertility that once existed in **Eden** will be restored. **women** will, painlessly, bear children every day (they envisioned this as a good thing; perhaps they were being hyperbolic). The Sages have even more to say about the fruitfulness of the earth in messianic times: **trees** will bear ripe fruit daily, and even wild trees will become fruit bearing. Wheat will grow as high as palms, and wheat grains as big as kidneys. A single grape will require a wagon to move and people will simply tap them for juice as they would a keg (Ket. 111b; Shab. 30b; *Nidd.* 31b; *EY*; *Sefer ha-Raziel; Igeret ha-Kodesh*).

1. Klein, *A Time to Be Born*, 41.
2. Sperber, *The Jewish Life Cycle*, 16, 452.
3. Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 160–161.
4. R. Patai, “Folk Customs and Charms Related to Childbirth,” *Talpiot* 6 (1978).

Fevers: In the past, the common (but often deadly) fever has been interpreted as a form of demonic attack, perhaps because of the link between **demons** and the infernal regions. Consequently, considerable Jewish pharmacology, remedies, and **healing incantations** are devoted to their treatment.

Fevers can be treated by reciting biblical verses, especially **Moses**'s plea for the recovery of **Miriam** (Num. 12:13) and/or the verse, "there was a bush all aflame, but it was not consumed" (Ex. 3:5). The **Talmud** offers folk remedies for many different kinds of fevers, almost all of which include magical elements (Git. 69a–70a). One recipe, using analogous **magic** symbolism, involves using **iron**, string, and a bush (think "burning bush") (Shab. 67a).

Hebrew magico-medical manuals found in the Cairo Geniza, like the Talmud, distinguish many types of fevers and offer different treatments for each.[1] One medieval text recommends a reversal incantation, reciting the word *Ochnotinos*, reducing the word one letter with each repetition, thereby reducing the fever (*SCh*).

1. Naveh and Shaked, *Magical Spells and Formulae*, 177, 185–87, 199, 202, 221.

Fig: *SEE* FRUIT.

Finger: (אצבע). Metaphorically, at least, God has "ten fingers." These are the ten utterances God made at **Creation** (Gen. R. 4:4; *SY* 1.3). The fingers of the human **hand** have a number of occult associations. According to the Testament of Solomon, **demons** will vampirically suck the thumbs of children, causing them to waste and die. The use of fingernails for the purposes of **divination** is a longstanding Jewish practice—one uses the light of the Havdalah **candle** (used for a ceremony marking the end of the **Sabbath**) to gaze into one's own nails. Young girls do so in hopes of seeing the face of the man they will marry, but earlier authorities held that all kinds of **omens**, for good or for ill, could be detected in the reflection. Conversely, there is a belief that cutting one's nails can adversely affect **memory** unless a specific order of trimming is followed: starting with the left hand, begin with finger four (ring) and end with one (thumb), and avoiding doing any two in sequence; right hand two to five. Fingernails can be used in magical formula and, most dangerously, in **witchcraft**. The careful disposal of trimmings is therefore imperative.

If a pregnant woman comes in contact with fingernail parings, the impurity adhering to the parings will adversely affect the fetus. White spots on the nails are considered a good omen. *SEE* HAND.

Fire: (אש/*aish*, Ara, *nura*). Fire is one of the four elements in classical physics, and is sometimes grouped as one of the three foundational elements of **Creation**:

> The rabbis taught: "Three things were made before the creation of our world: Water, Wind, and Fire. Water birthed darkness, Fire birthed light, and Wind birthed wisdom." (Ex. R. 15:22)

Fire is both a symbol of beneficence and destruction, as well as a manifestation of the numinous. It is also a symbol of passion and regeneration.

According to one rabbinic tradition, fire was created on the second day of Creation (Pes. 54a). Another tradition claims that a primordial fire preceded light, and gave birth to it. **Talmud** teaches that there are "six varieties" of fire, some natural and some supernatural (Yoma 21b). It is, along with water, the material that makes up the heavens. Fire was first introduced to humanity at the end of the **Sabbath**, when God taught **Adam** how to use a flint (Pes. 54a; Sanh. 38b).[1]

Fire is frequently a manifestation of divine wrath, but also of divine Presence (Deut. 5:4). God makes the promises to Abraham in the form of fire (Gen. 15). Sodom and Gomorrah meet a fiery end (Gen. 19). God appears in a burning bush (Ex. 3), rains fiery hail down upon the Egyptians (Ex. 8), and sends a fiery angel to protect the Israelites from pursuit by their former masters (Ex. 13) and later to guide the people in the desert. **Elijah** is closely linked to fire, being able to smite soldiers of King Ahaziah (1 Kings 1) and ignite offerings (2 Kings 18) with heavenly fire.

The theurgic sacrificial offerings of ancient Israel were performed using the medium of fire. *Aish zara*, "alien fire," however, was forbidden in the sacrificial cult. The exact nature of this fire, whether it was fire introduced from an outside source or fire offered at unsanctioned times, is not clear. Its use by Nadav and Abihu triggered their fatal punishment by divine fire from **heaven** (Lev. 10:1–2). According to the **Midrash**, subsequent to this disaster, the **altar** fire descended from heaven to consume the sacrificial offerings (Yoma 21a–b). This celestial fire transferred to the **Temple** and burned uninterrupted, **rain** or shine, until the apostasy of King Manasseh, a positive manifestation of the same power that killed Nadav and Abihu. Sages experiencing revelatory moments appear to be ringed in fire (Lev. R. 16:4; Zohar II:14a–15a).

The **Bible** describes God as a "consuming fire." In the seven heavens, fire serves in the place of matter as the fundamental substance that gives form to reality. The divine **chariot** is wreathed in fire. Many angels, such as **Metatron**

and **Gabriel**, are composed of fire. There is a special class of fiery angels called **serafim**, and the sweat that pours from them in their labors creates the river of Light that flows around heaven. The **palaces** of heaven are made of supernal fires. Even the primordial **Torah** itself is made of white fire and letters of black fire. Torah **study** is compared to fire in that one who stays too far from it freezes, but one who draws too close is burned. When a person has a revelatory experience, that event may be accompanied by manifestations of supernal fire (Deut. 5:4; III Enoch; Zohar III: Naso; Lev. R. 16:4; Chag. 14b; Zohar I:94b).

On the infernal side, the fire of **Gehenna** burns sixty times hotter than earthly fire. There are five different kinds of fire in Gehenna: fires that consume but do not drink; fires that drink but do not consume; fires that drink and consume; fires that neither drink nor consume, and a fire that consumes fire (BhM 1:147). Demons also can have a fiery appearance, while RaSHI claims that fire is one of the things demons eat for sustenance.

Fire may be used as part of a cursing ritual (burning up the written name of the intended victim) or for **divination**. As a source of light, fire drives away demons. Salamanders are a creature born out of fire and, according to some traditions, their **blood** provides protection from burns (Pes. 54a, 118a–b; Zev. 61b; Sanh. 38b; Ber. 57b; PdRE 4; Chag. 27a; Ex. R. 15:22; Num. R. 2:23; J. Shek. 6:1; *SCh* 547–48). *SEE* ANGEL AND ANGELOLOGY; DEMONS; LAMP; LIGHT; PHOENIX; SACRIFICE; SALAMANDER.

1. Frankel and Platkin Teutsch, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*, 53–54.

Fire, the Seven Angels of: According to the Book of the Great Name, there are seven angels of **fire**: TRMWM, Uriel, Afiel, Gabriel, Nuriel, Paniel, and Serafiel. Invoking them will protect the adept against being burned. *SEE* SERAF OR SERAFIM.

Firmament: (רקיע/*Rakia*). God placed a *rakia*, “spread out/expanse,” between the waters of **Earth** and the waters of **heaven** to separate them (Gen. 1). The Rabbis speculated at length as to the nature of this barrier:

> It was taught in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua: The thickness of the firmament is as the width of two fingers. But Rabbi Chanina disputes this, as Rabbi Acha said in the name of Rabbi Chanina: It says, “Can you help Him *tarkia* the heavens, firm as a mirror of cast metal?” (Job 37:18)—*Tarkia* means that they were made as a thin sheet of metal … Rabbi Yochanan says: Ordinarily, when a person stretches out a tent, it sags after time; but here, “He stretched [the heavens], like a tent in which to dwell” (Isa. 40:22), and it is written

> "firm" (Job ibid.) Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish says: Ordinarily, when a person casts vessels, they eventually rust; but here, "*like* a mirror of cast metal"—that at every moment, they appear as new. (Chag. 12b)

Some Sages argued there are two firmaments, based on a biblical verse (Deut. 10:14), but most teach that there are seven. Later traditions identify the word *rakia* as referring to just one of the seven heavens, the level that holds the heavenly bodies (Chag. 12b; Pes. 94a–94b). *SEE* CURTAIN OF HEAVEN.

Firstborn: (בכור/*bechor* also *reishit*). God was forced to destroy the firstborn males of the Egyptians, both cattle and human, on Israel's behalf (Ex. 12). All of the ten **plagues** are interpreted as a response to some aspect of the suffering endured by the Israelites during their enslavement, and the plague of *machat bechorim*, of slaying the Egyptian firstborn, is retribution for a crime mentioned explicitly in the Exodus narrative: the slaying of Israelite boys on **Pharaohs** orders (Ex. 2). Still, because God is required to destroy a part of Creation for Israel's sake, God acquires title to the firstborn males of Israel, **animal** and human, in perpetuity. This means that every male creature that "opens the womb" must either be given over to the sanctuary, destroyed, or redeemed from God in a cultic ritual (Ex. 13:13). In the ceremony of *Pidyon ha-Ben*, a firstborn son is brought on the thirty-first day after birth before a **priest** and "redeemed" with a donation of money to charity (Ber. 47b). A firstborn with two heads needs only one redemption price (Men. 37–37b. Also see B.M. 61b on God's concern with knowing the firstborn).

Fish: (דג). Fish are a symbol of both good luck and **fertility** in Judaism. They are considered a good luck **food** to eat on the **Sabbath** (B.B. 133b; Shab. 119a). This is based on the language of Genesis 1, where God uses the identical wording to bless the fish as is used to bless the Sabbath. In Zohar II:30b, fish are understood to be a symbol for **Angels**. A fish is also a good omen since a sea creature, *Leviathan*, will be the main course at the messianic banquet (B.B. 73a–75a). These associations also make fish popular food on the Sabbath, which itself is a foretaste of the **World to Come**. A mystical tradition teaches that the **Souls** of the righteous are sometimes reincarnated as fish (*Megillat Setarim; Yismach Moshe* 29b; *ShB* 108).

In accordance with the food prohibitions found in the **Torah**, only fish with fins and scales are considered fit to eat. It was also held in Talmudic times that **eating** fish and meat in combination could bring on leprosy (Pes. 76b).

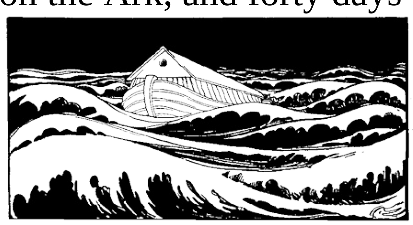
Ever since the account found in the book of Tobit, where the hero defeats a **demons** by burning the heart and liver of a rotten fish (*Tobit* 6), fish have been considered a potent defense against evil spirits and the **evil eye**. The evil eye, in particular, has no power over them because they dwell in the sea and so are covered from its view (Ber. 20a, 55b; Sot. 36b; B.M. 84a; B.B. 118b). For those reasons, fish images frequently appear on **amulets**. For the same reason, European families often gave their sons the name Fishl as a protection against bad luck. Fish parts also are required in a variety of folk remedies. Because fish are so numerous, they are also considered a fertility food. Fish are also used in **segulot** (folk remedies). Perhaps the most unusual involves placing a live fish under the sole of the foot as a treatment for jaundice (*Shemesh Tzedakah*, no. 23).

Five: *SEE* NUMBERS.

Flies: (זבוב). Flies symbolize decay and corruption. They constitute one of the ten **plagues** God inflicts on **Egypt** during the **Exodus**. Flies are also linked to the demonic; Beelzebub is sometimes known as “Lord of the Flies.” Materials from flies can be used to treat hornet stings (Shab. 77b).

Flood, the: (מבול). The biblical account of God flooding the entire world in response to the wicked devolution of Creation (Gen. 6:5–9:17). God is effectively reversing the creative process, releasing the watery **chaos** (the “floodgates” of **heaven** and the “fountains” beneath the **Earth**, Gen. 7:11) that was contained in the **Creation** account of Genesis 1, and the result constitutes the first apocalyptic destruction story in the **Bible**.

Occupying a large place in the Western imagination, the biblical account is not even 100 verses long. A wholly miraculous tale, its supernatural aspects include not only the **rain**, but also the marvelous assembly of all the earth’s **animal** species, their management on the Ark, and forty days of continuous rain.



The Ark upon the void by E. M. Lilien

Post-biblical apocalyptic and rabbinic literature adds many fantastic details. The **Talmud** provides a laundry-list of offenses committed against God and each

other in the ante-diluvian world. Aside from the human arrogance and violence, which seemed inadequate justification for wiping out all of [land-bound] creation, the Sages, based on the wording “all flesh had corrupted …” (6:12) assert the corruption was so complete that even animals sought to have **sex** with different species (Sanh. 107b–108a).

The generation of the Flood felt no need to repent, because they believed their mastery of **magic** would protect them. Later they made various attempts to prevent the flooding, including plating the earth in **iron** and using a miraculous sponge (I Enoch 6:2, 7:5; Gen. R. 30:7; Tanh. Noah 5, 12; Sanh. 108a–b). The race of giants refused to repent because they believed they could simply stand above the floodwaters (PdRE 22). Some giants did in fact survive, most notably Og of Bashan. God mingled the rain **water** (which is male) with the water of the **abyss** (which is female) to procreate even more floods. The **Land of Israel**, however, was spared from the flood waters (Gen. R. 26; MhG; Zev. 113a; Midd. 61a). The generation of the Flood will not be judged and have no place in the **World to Come** (Sanh. 107b), a teaching which inspired later interpreters to conclude that **demons** are the restless **Souls** of the diluvian dead. *SEE* FALLEN ANGELS; GIANTS; NOAH.

Foetor Judaicus: Among the many pernicious **myths** circulating about Jews in the Middle Ages, the claim that Jews have a particular repugnant odor was one of the most popular.[1] Sometimes this smell is identified as sulfur and brimstone, the odor of hell. In popular Christian imagination, baptism resolves this particular hygiene problem permanently (Martin Luther, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew*), but evidently bathing in Christian **blood** also gives temporary relief (Franciscus of Piacenza, *Sermons*). This latter explanation also conveniently helps resolve the problem of why some Jews actually lack this congenital stink —Jews who don’t smell are ritual murderers. The Jewish “stink,” thematically tied to the Jewish “nose,” became a major trope of 19th- and 20th-century anti-Semitism, and even found its way into European philosophy (Arthur Schopenhauer, *On Religion*).[2]

1. H. Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 84, 110.

2. Eilberg-Schwartz, *People of the Body*, 249–254.

Food: (מזון). Food is emblematic of life and blessing, as the **Zohar** declares, “Blessing does not rest on an empty table”(II:88a). Jewish food spirituality is three-fold. It is grounded in *kashrut*/“fitness,” *berachah*/“blessing,” and *Seudah*/“[celebratory] meal.” The essence of these things, expressed in manifold

and varied ways by different Jewish groups is: thinking about the kinds of foods eaten and under what conditions, gratitude for the **blessings** of food, and using food as a medium by which Jews celebrate life.

The Jewish rules of *kashrut* (fitness) are the most extensive set of food taboos found in any culture, rivaled perhaps only by the Hindu Laws of Mani. Most attempts to explain these laws appeal either to rational explanations, such as hygiene, or to holiness, the effort to distinguish Israel from the surrounding peoples. Though it is rare that Jewish interpreters offer occult explanations for these rules, from the beginning it has been clear that food has metaphysical significance. A good example would be the biblical teaching that the life-vitality of an **animal** resides in its **blood**, so that blood had to be spilled rather than consumed, in order to return the life force to God (Gen. 9).

The Sages of the **Talmud** characterized the dining table of the Jewish home as a *mikdash me'at* (a "small **altar**"), elevating the mundane business of **eating** to a sacerdotal level. The idea of a meal punctuated with Torah **study** also goes back at least as far as the Talmud (Avot 3:4; Tan. 5b). Yet the Rabbis were most concerned with the practical impact food has on the person, as well as defining the proper parameters of what, when, and how to eat that honors the divine mandates and prohibitions. Certain foods can affect people in ways beyond mere nutrition. Too many olives, for example, can adversely affect **memory**. On the other hand, foods eaten at certain propitious times can have positive influence over one's fortune. Thus the Talmud advises eating pumpkin, fenugreek, leek, beets, and dates at the New Year (Hor. 12a). Pomegranates eaten on the New Year will enhance fertility. The consumption of sweets at special occasions (bar mitzvahs, **Wedding**s, and the like) portend of success and happiness; the cradles of newborns are sometimes sprinkled with sugar and sweets before the child is first placed in it.[1]

Food is also used for medicinal purposes. **herbs** especially were used in Jewish folk **healing**. While the fitness of a food has always been an issue, from the time of the Mishnah on, any food thought to be of medicinal value, even forbidden food, should be part of the healer's arsenal (M. Yoma 8; Shab. 67a). Thus a healing poultice or remedy could include noxious foodstuffs. Abraham Yagel even prescribed crawfish cooked up in a potion to treat a mental illness.

The Talmud teaches that food left out unattended attracts **demons** and evil spirits. **Isaac Luria** and his followers also taught that the prohibited foods were manifestations of the Sitra Achra and, unlike kosher foods, their nitzotz, their holy "spark," could not be released through consumption. Chasidic teachings

include the belief that a damaged **Soul** may be reincarnated as an animal or plant, toward the eventuality that the food made from those things will be eaten by a saintly person, at which point the soul achieves release (*Likkutai Torah; Tanya; Megillat Setarim*; *ShB* 108).

Kabbalism offers the first fully developed metaphysical discourse on food. It defines different levels of sustenance, though all food flows from on high. There is “divine food,” “higher food,” or “angel food,” in addition to coarser human food; then there is the food of impurity, which corresponds to the foods forbidden by kashrut. This last category carries a demonic cast. Divine food, exemplified by the **manna** eaten by the Israelites, conveys not only nutrition, but **wisdom**, it is gustatory revelation, as discussed in this famous passage of Zohar:

> Adonai said to Moses, “Look, I am about to rain down bread for you from heaven” (Ex. 16:4) … Come and see every single day dew trickles from the Holy Ancient One to the Short-Tempered One, and the whole Orchard of Holy Apples [lower world] is blessed. Some of that dew is drawn to those below, and holy angels are nourished by it, each and every one according to his diet, as is written: “Man ate the bread of the mighty” (Ps. 78:25), for of that food Israel ate in the wilderness. Rabbi Shimon said: Some people are nourished by it now. And who are they? These Companions, engaging in Torah day and night … When Israel entered and cleaved to the King by revealing the holy seal, they became worthy eating other, higher bread—higher than at first, when they went out of Egypt, eating the bread called *matzah.* Now they entered and proved worthy of eating other, higher bread from a high place … Highest food of all is food of the Companions, those engaging in Torah [i.e. they are nourished by Wisdom] … They eat food of spirit and soul-breath, from a distant, supernal place, most precious of all. Happy is their portion, as is written: “Wisdom gives life to its possessors” (Eccl. 7:12). Happy is the share of the body that can be nourished by food of the soul! (Zohar II:61b–62a; Also see IV: 328–334)

Mystical sources find great metaphysical power in the act of eating, usually inspired by the example of the sacred meal eaten by **Moses**, **Aaron**, and the Elders in God’s presence on **Mount Sinai** (Ex. 24). In texts such as the Zohar, there appear many mystical food rituals. Thus the food on the Sabbath (the day when Israel received double manna in the desert) takes on great importance. One must eat three meals over the course of the day in order to receive the additional soul granted each Jew on the Sabbath and to draw closer the angelic realms. A

precise **ritual**, even involving the arrangement of the foods on the table in relationship to each other, must be followed for each meal. Failure to do the rituals correctly puts you at the mercy of the demonic.[2] Eating food from the tish of a righteous man is also considered a source of supernatural **blessing** and protection.

Performing the **ritual** blessing food as prescribed by tradition theurgically stimulates the divine potencies, yielding continuing food abundance:

> Look, I am about to rain down bread for you from heaven" (Ex. 16:4) … All the inhabitants of the world await, lifting their eyes to the Blessed Holy One. Therefore, every single day all those scions of faith should request their food from the Blessed Holy One, offering their prayers for it. Why? Because whoever offers his prayer to the Blessed Holy One for his nourishment causes that tree containing all nourishment [The cosmic "All-Tree" described in the Bahir] to be blessed every day through Him. The meaning of the matter is: "Blessed be Adonai day by day" (Ps. 68:20). Even if one has it, he should make a request before the blessed Holy One, offering his prayer for food each day, so that blessings will prevail [for all] every single day above. (Zohar II:62a–b)

Providing food for the poor, an important biblical obligation, also serves the **sefirot**, keeping the male (giving) and female (receiving) aspects of God in balance (Zohar I:17b).

At least one Sage, Eleazar, could even make food (cucumbers, to be precise) magically materialize (Sanh. 68a). In Sefer ha-Razim, a long list of foodstuffs are used for a variety of magical purposes, medical and otherwise. *SEE* FASTING; HEALING; HERBS AND VEGETABLES; PHARMACOPOEIA.

1. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 184, 213.

2. J. Hecker, "Food Practices in the Zohar," in *Judaism in Practice: From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period*, L. Fine ed., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 353–63.

Footstool: (הדום). A footstool was a symbol of status in the ancient world, and the appearance of the word in the **Bible** becomes the occasion for considerable metaphysical speculation. Given God does not literally have "feet," what does the term mean to convey? The authors of the biblical books variously identify the world (Isa. 66:1), or **Jerusalem**, Mount Zion, or the **Temple** as God's footstool (I Chron. 28:2; Ezek. 43:7; Ps. 99:5; Lam. 2:1). **Hechalot** literature tends to identify heaven, or one of the seven heavens, as the footrest of God (*Synopsis, Hechalot Rabbati* 153). **German Pietist** , by contrast, regarded the

Torah to be God's "foundation." This **myth** conveys the idea that the Torah is, as it were, the part of the **Throne of Glory** that projects into this dimension, providing the rationale for liturgical bowing in the direction of the Torah during a service (*SCh* 1585). The Kabbalist Jacob ben Sheshet regards the phrase the "earth is my footstool" to be a metonym—the "[humanity on] earth is my footstool," (i.e., God's stability rests upon humanity). [1] When people strive for union with the Godhead, they uphold God's creation. In Bachya's commentary to the Torah, he identifies the *harom* with the sefirah of Yesod, the male generative principle (comment to Gen. 17:13).

1. Dan and Kiener, *The Early Kabbalah*, 106–108.

Foreskin: *SEE* AREL; CIRCUMCISION; PHALLUS.

Fortis, Abraham Isaac: (Polish, ca. 18th century). Physician and **amulet** maker. Professionally trained in Western medicine, yet conversant in amulets and **segulot**, Fortis was a celebrated doctor who embraced both Jewish folk **healing** practices and the emerging naturalistic theories of medicine.

Fortunetelling: *SEE* DIVINATION.

Forty: *SEE* NUMBERS.

Forty-Two Part Name of God: *SEE* NAMES OF GOD.

Foundation Stone: (אבן השתייה/*Even ha-Shetiyah*). This rock is the capstone of **Creation**. Under this stone God trapped the floodwaters of the **abyss** (Isa. 28:16; Sanh. 29b), the source of the entire world's **water** . All the world's **winds** also originate from there (*Otzer Ma'asot*, 121). This stone sits under the **Temple** mount. It is the *axis mundi*, the **navel** of the cosmos:

> As the navel is set in the center of the human body, so is the land of Israel the navel of the world … situated in the center of the world, and Jerusalem in the centre of the land of Israel, and the sanctuary in the center of Jerusalem, and the holy place in the centre of the sanctuary, and the ark in the center of the holy place, and the Foundation Stone before the holy place, because from it the world was founded. (Tanh. Kedoshim 10)

The stone was cast into the abyss and the universe coagulated around it (Zohar I:231a). One tradition identifies it as a piece of God's **Throne of Glory** and inscribed with the **Tetragrammaton** (*Sefer ha-Zichronot* 1.6). When the **name of God** is misused, the name on the stone fades, weakening the world:

> For when the Blessed Holy One planted the world, He sank into the depths a single stone, engraved with this Name, plunging it into the deep. When the [primordial] waters desire to rise, they see the mystery of the Holy Name engraved on the stone, and they retreat and subside, turning back … When human being swear an oath truly, that stone rise to receive it … the world endures … when a humans swear a false oath, that stone rises to receive it … the letters fly through the depths and scatter … (Zohar II:91b)

A chunk of the stone was used by God to make the two tablets of the **Ten Commandments**. God moved this stone only once, to unleash **the Flood** of **Noah's** day. When King David tried to move the stone into the **Holy of Holies**, **chaos** was unleashed and it was only by using the theurgic power of reciting the **psalms** that he was able to drive the waters of the abyss back to their proper place (Suk. 53a–b). Other traditions claim the rock levitates in a cave beneath the Temple Mount, and when it finally falls the coming of the **Messiah** is imminent (Suk. 49a, 53a–b; J. Sanh. 10:2, 29a;
M. Yoma 5:2; J. Yoma 5:4, 8:4; Yoma 54a–b; PdRE 35; Zohar II:152a).

Fountain of Elisha: A spring, also called the "Eye of the Sultan," found outside of Jericho that was miraculously cured of tainted water by the **Prophet** (2 Kings 2).

Four: *SEE* NUMBERS.

Four Craftsmen: Four allegorical figures mentioned in a **vision** of the prophet **Zechariah** (2:3). The historical and/or messianic identities of the four vary from commentator to commentator. The most famous list appears in Sukkah 52b, which identifies them as Messiah ben David, Messiah ben Joseph, **Elijah**, and the Righteous **priest**.

Four Kingdoms: The four beasts that appear in **Daniel**'s dream (Dan. 8) are allegories of four empires that oppressed the Jews, but exactly which four is debatable. Most Jewish commentators choose from among these five due to their historic roles in oppressing Jews: Assyria, **Babylon**, Persia, Greece, and/or Rome. Genesis Rabbah claims that the same four kingdoms listed in Genesis 14 will also be the four kingdoms Daniel saw, pitted against the messianic Jewish kingdom at the end of time (Gen. R. 42.2).

Four Sages: In one of the most discussed texts of Jewish **mysticism**, **Talmud** tractate Chagigah 14b relates a cryptic parabolic story of four Sages who entered פרדס **Pardes**, "paradise." The four Sages were Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Elisha

ben Abuyah, and Akiba ben Joseph. The Talmudic tale reads as follows:

> The Rabbis taught: Four entered Pardes. They were Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Acher and Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva said to them, “When you come to the place of pure marble stones, do not say, ‘Water! Water!’ for it is said, ‘He who speaks untruths shall not stand before My eyes’ ” (Psalm 101:7). Ben Azzai gazed and died. Regarding him the verse states, “Precious in the eyes of G-d is the death of His pious ones” (Psalm 116:15). Ben Zoma gazed and was harmed. Regarding him the verse states, “Did you find honey? Eat as only much as you need, lest you be overfilled and vomit it” (Prov. 25:16). Acher cut down the plantings. Rabbi Akiva entered in peace and left in peace. (Chag. 14b)

Exactly what “entering Pardes” means is the greatest of all the mysteries associated with this story, though the “marble” passage is surely the most obscure feature. Some say “entering Pardes” involved mystical **ascent**. Others say it involved esoteric interpretations of the **Torah** (see **Pardes**), yet others take it to refer to the **study** of **Gnosticism**. Whatever the reality behind the event, it proved catastrophic for three of the four men. Much speculation of the nature of mystical ascent springs from this legend, which exists in several variant forms (T. *Hag.* 2:3–4; Gen. R. 2:4; Lev. R. 16:4; *S of S R.* 1:10).

One tradition elaborates on the story thusly: Ben Azzai was so captivated by what he saw he could not give it up and refused to return to his **Body**. Ben Zoma became so immersed in the mysteries he had seen that he ceased to be able to function in life. Ben Abuyah saw Metatron. Thinking he had seen another deity besides God, he declared “there are two powers in heaven” (he embraced Gnosticism) and turned against the Torah (Chag. 15a; J. Chag. 77). In general, the story is treated as a cautionary tale about engaging in certain kinds of religious speculation and/or experiences. The exact nature of the harmful pursuit is ultimately left to the reader and/or commentator.

Four Species: (ארבעה מינים/*Arbaah Minim*). The **Torah** specifies that four plant species be gathered for the celebration of the **Sukkot** harvest festival (Lev. 23). The Torah is not explicit as to the identity of two of the species, but the Sages have established the four species as the palm, the willow, the myrtle, and the citron. The branches of the first three species are bound together to form a bouquet called the “lulav,” while the citron (etrog in Hebrew) is held apart. During the holiday, these four species are used in a mysterious **ritual**: the species are held together in two hands and waved toward six directions: the four

compass points, up toward the sky, then down to the **Earth**.

A number of homiletic explanations are given for this ceremony, but there are also some *sodot*, esoteric explanations, usually based on the belief that these four species symbolize and activate different forces of the divine **sefirot**. The most prominent of these esoteric interpretations highlight the phallic appearance of the bouquet when the lulav and etrog are held together; in doing this ritual, humans perform a mimetic ritual of bringing together the feminine and masculine forces in God in a kind of *hieros gamos* ("a sacred union"). This is apparent in Kabbalistic interpretations of the ritual:

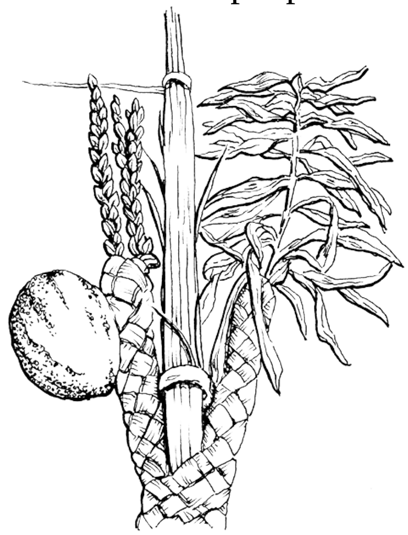
> He [God] planted an etrog among them [the male plants] … the etrog is female *(*Bahir 172) … The lulav is male … (Bahir 198. Also see *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot 5*; *Sefat Emet*, comment on Sukkot)

Additionally, the morphology of the lulav, with its shaft-like branches clutched together with the round (womb-like/breast-like) etrog, points to an obvious fertility theme. This interpretation is quite overt in **Kabbalah**, where the lulav is a symbol of Yesod and/or Tiferet, the male sexual dimension of the **Pleroma** (Zohar III:121a, 255a).

Not coincidentally, the holiday of Sukkot is the holiday that marks the beginning of the rainy season in the **Land of Israel**. Given that Israel has no year-round rivers aside from the Jordan, the coming of **rain**—essential water for the crops—is a central theme of the Sukkot holiday. In the Jewish liturgical cycle, this is the time to initiate the daily **Prayers** for rain. Related to this, there was the ceremony of water drawing libation performed in the **Temple** on Sukkot in which the **altar** and its surrounds were splashed with water, in which the waters of the sky and the aquifers are summoned to come together.

So applying this logic to the lulav, one realizes that dryness and moisture are denoted in each of the objects. The palm core is rather dry. The willow is a water-needy plant, and the willow branch of the lulav notably withers over the course of the week. The myrtle, by contrast, retains its fresh appearance. And the etrog is the ultimate fruity reservoir of moisture. Aside from water, the only notable feature of all four species is that they are all largely inedible. Water is the most meaningful marker associated with each. The Jerusalem **Talmud** hints at this when it comments "they come as intercessors for water" (Tan. 1:1). Most striking of all, when the lulav is waved as prescribed, it's rustling makes a noise that mimics rainfall, suggesting the waving ceremony was meant as a sympathetic ritual of power, inspiring the urge to rain in all parts of the earth,

from the sky to under the earth (filling **wells**, rivers, and lakes), sort of the way the sound of running water can stimulate in people the need to urinate.



The fours species in ritual array

By directing it across the earth toward all the cardinal spacial orientations, again, has a strong theurgic logic to it. This too is a continuation our water theme, for, as the **Bahir** also teaches, "The concept of water contains both male and female aspects … (86)." This notion of masculine (atmospheric) and feminine (ground) waters that combine to fructify the earth occurs throughout traditional Jewish thought.

Many traditional Jews keep the lulav and etrog after the holiday season, believing that their ritual use has now imbued them with *kedushah*, a beneficent spiritual power. They are subsequently used as talismans and in folk medicine.

Four Worlds of Emanation: (ארבעה עולמות). According to classical Kabbalah, the universe is a progressive unfolding resulting from an overflow of divine energy from the Ein Sof. Four "worlds" or supernal realms result from this emanation: Atzilut (Emanation), Beriyah (Creation), **Yetzirah** (Formation), and Asiyah (Action). These are often expressed by the acronym, ABiYAh. The biblical justification for this metaphysical model is Isaiah 43:7, "Every one that is called by My name and for My *glory*, I have *created*, I have *formed*, even I have *made*."

Different traditions elaborate on each of these, arguing they correspond to the structure of the **Soul**, the angelic hierarchies, categories of liturgy, and various spiritual and material realities. *SEE* EMANATION; KABBALAH; PARTZUFIM; SEFIROT.

Fox: (שועל/*Shual*). This most cunning of **animals** frequently appears in Jewish fables as a trickster (S o S 2:15; Sot. 10a; Ber. 61b; Sanh. 38b–39a; Yalkut Ex. 56a; *Hedar Zekenim*). Its appearance on a person's left side also portended an ill **omen**. A foxtail wards off the **evil eye** (Tos. Shab. 4:5). Its tooth was used as a treatment for insomnia, although the Sages do not elaborate on the specific method to be followed (Shab. 67a).

Francesca Sarah of Safed: **Medium** (Turkish, ca. 16th century). Francesca was famed for her prophetic **visions** and was frequently consulted by leading rabbis and even Kabbalists (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot* 18; *Divrei Yosef*, 264–366).

Frankincense: (לבונה/*Levunah*). An aromatic **incense** used in the **Temple** cult (Men. 8a–8b, 52a, 59a–59b, 106b). It is a resin extracted from the Boswellia Thurifera bush found in Arabia, Somalia, and India. It also has psychotropic properties and was used to sedate individuals facing execution (Sanh. 43a).

Frankists: A heretical occult sect that arose among the Jews of Poland in the 18th century. Evidently influenced by the Kabbalistic teachings of Shabbatai Tzvi, a Polish Jew named Jacob Frank claimed to be the **reincarnation** of the **Patriarch Jacob** and created a **secret** circle of followers. Frankist ritual gatherings were antinomian and appear to have involved the conscious violations of the **commandments** in order to fulfill Frank's teaching that "One must nullify the Torah in order to fulfill it." These violations included, most sensationally, sexual rites and **rituals**. Only slightly less outrageous was the belief that Frankists should convert to **Christianity**, because this would allow the Frankists to conquer the Christians from within. Although placed under a cherem by rabbinical authorities**,** the Frankists found sympathetic gentile authorities that protected them for a while. The group did eventually convert en masse to Christianity, only to find themselves in trouble with the Church for their continuing bizarre and heretical activities. Though Frank served an extended prison term for his Christian apostasy, his influence continued throughout the rest of his life. His daughter continued as the sect leader after his death, and though the group perpetuated the belief that Frank never actually died, the Frankists gradually declined and disappeared by the late 19th century.[1]

1. Rabinowicz, *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, 133; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 315–18.

Freemasons: A secretive fraternal society. Though Freemasonry espouses an ideal of universal brotherhood and a nonsectarian notion of God, acceptance of Jews

among their ranks varied from country to country, and in some places, like Prussia, Jews had to form their own segregated Jewish lodges. The pernicious **myth** that Freemasonry was an arm of the "Jewish conspiracy" for world domination emerged in Europe in the mid-19th century. This may be the combined result of Masonry's reputation as a "secret society" and its liberal ideology of universalism that favored the liberal political notions of citizenship, enfranchisement, and the efforts of Jews to gain full rights and equal status in Europe. This conspiracy theory of a "Masonic-Jewish" alliance was first widely disseminated during the Dreyfus Trial in France in 1870.This supposed plot was enshrined in the Protocols of the elders of Zion and has been a staple of anti-Semitic paranoia ever since.

Free Will: (רצון חופשי/*Ratzon chofshi*). The power to choose freely is one of the organizing **myths** axiomatic of Judaism (Gen. 2–3) and one of the distinctive characteristics of the God of Israel, because unlike the gods of Pagan theology, God's freedom is not impinged upon by fate, *shimtu*, norns, or any other notion of destiny. In mystical theology, will is a function of the highest of God's attributes, **Keter**.

Human free will is a critical way in which we bear the "image of God" (Deut. 30). But how human autonomy is to be reconciled with God's omnipotent authority remains an intellectual puzzle, and there are multiple Jewish answers to that.

Post-biblically, Philo of Alexandria (d. 40 CE) addresses human freedom allegorically, finding it in the figure of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and **evil** (*Allegory* 1.60–62, commenting on Gen. 2:9).

The rabbinic tradition largely amplifies on the biblical themes of personal liberty (*Mekhilta Mishpatim*) and national freedom from foreign rule (Ex. R. 32:1). The rabbinic sources adhere to the biblical notion that the Children of **Israel** achieve true freedom only by choosing to serve a divine, rather than human, master. Thus, in the interpretation of Exodus 32:16, "the writing was the writing of God, engraved upon the tablets," Avot 6:2 teaches, "Do not read [the verse as] *harut* ("engraved") but rather *heirut* ("freedom"), for no person is free except one who engages in the **study** of **Torah**" (also see Avot 3:5; Sanh. 91b).

Conversely, the Sages also adhere to those limitations on freedom that are assumed by the **Bible**. So, for example, like the Bible, slavery is taken for granted as a social and economic reality, and the **Talmud** focuses on the regulation of the practice, rather than its abolition.

Despite such contemporaneous realities, the Rabbis repeatedly affirm the ideal that a Jew should value liberty over subservience to another, even another Jew. This finds vivid affirmation in the exegesis Exodus 21:6, which commands a person who willingly enters perpetual servitude to have his earlobe punctured. He must do this, say the Sages, using the same organ that heard God proclaim his freedom at **Sinai**, as a reminder he is giving up God as his master in exchange for a mere mortal (Kid. 22b).

The most significant outgrowth of the rabbinic period is that of freedom of thought, which emerges from the Sages' incipient ideology of free inquiry. While some rabbinic passages try to proscribe the holding certain ideas (M. Sanh. 10:1), looming over specific citations is the rabbinic method for reading the Bible, a method that both implicitly and explicitly endorses intellectual freedom. Over many centuries the Sages offer frequent and elaborate justification for the honoring of differing and dissenting opinions (Chag. 3b; Ber. 58a; Eruv. 13b; Tos. Sot. 7:12; *Tanchuma Buber*, Pinchas 1). In this the Sages use the object of the Bible itself, simultaneously with its contents, as the grounds for justifying freedom of interpretation (Sanh. 34a). This philosophy of intellectual tolerance with regards to diverging interpretations of scripture serves as the foundation and precedent for later Jewish theories of freedom of conscience, and remains one of the hallmarks of Jewish intellectual culture that derives from the Bible.

Medieval explorations of freedom otherwise centered on the on-going experience of **exile** and Jewish subjugation to foreign **nations**. These discussions mostly conceptualize freedom in terms of a messianic restoration of Jewish life, monarchy, and sovereignty in the **Land of Israel**, as described by the Hebrew **Prophets**. See, for example, **Maimonides**'s use of multiple biblical texts in his description of the messianic era (*Mishneh Torah*, Hilchot Melachim 11–12, especially 12:4).

Recently added to the confluence of the Bible and modern Jewish ideologies of personal liberty is the venerable rabbinic concept of *kavod ha-briyot*, "the dignity of [human] creatures." Avot 4:1 finds a biblical basis for this in 1 Samuel 2:30, and the principle has been invoked in Jewish tradition to mitigate, or even negate, onerous or humiliating aspects of rabbinic regulation, communal conventions, and even biblical **law** (Ber. 19b; Sif. D. 192). In a contemporary context this principle is being applied in arguments against discriminatory attitudes and prohibitions within the tradition directed at the disabled, **women**, and, most recently, homosexuals. *SEE* FATE.

Fringes: (ציצית/*Tzitzit*). God commanded the ancient Israelite men to wear *tzitzit* ("fringes") on the corners of their outer garment, or *tallit* (a toga-like wrap). These fringes are both symbols of devotion and, more magically, receptors of spiritual energy and inspiration. Each fringe consists of eight strands made from four strings, five knots, and four groups of twists between each knot; the four groups consist of seven, eight, eleven, and thirteen windings. One thread was to be blue, the rest white. Today, when all clothing is tailored, observant Jews will wear their fringes on a special garment, a square **Prayer** shawl also called a *tallit* and/or a poncho-like undergarment called a *tallit katan*.

The required blue (*techelet*) strand had to be made from a special source, from the extract of a creature known as the chilazon. When the identity of this **animal** was lost, sometime during the disruptions between the Byzantine and Islamic empires, the use of a blue thread ceased. The chilazon is probably the Murex Trunculus shellfish found off the coast of Lebanon. Until recently, it was only known how to extract a purple dye from the creature, but a method for turning the purple dye a deep sky blue has been recovered, and it may be possible once again to restore the ancient blue thread to the tzitzit.[1]

One esoteric teaching holds that the dangling threads represent both the undone work of **Creation** and the divine *shefa* (or **emanation**), which flows "downward" into the Four worlds. Therefore the fringes are actually a kind of metaphysical conduit, directing divine energy to the wearer from on high. The knots represent the power of the **commandments** to "bind" **sin**, or even **demons**. Based on this, the Sages occasionally credit the fringes with a supernatural ability to prevent one from sinning. In one tale, the fringes literally slap their wearer in the face when he is about to transgress. In at least one example, a tallit has been credited with producing miraculous healings and was kept by an eastern European community for several generations. A seriously sick child will be wrapped in the tallit with the hope of a cure (**Bachya**'s comments on Num. 15:38; Num. R. 17:9; Zohar I:23b; *Sifrei Num.* 15:41; Men. 44a; *Etz ha-Chayyim*, *Sha'ar ha-Chashmal* 2). *SEE* HAIR; KNOTS; ZER ANPIN.

1. A. Kaplan, *The Aryeh Kaplan Anthology* (New York: NCSY Press, 1998), 166–223.

Frogs: The second **plague** God sent against the Egyptians in the **Exodus** story. Rabbah bar Channah claimed to have seen a frog the size of a castle (B.B. 73a).

Fruit: Various fruits symbolize supernal higher realities in Judaism. **Kabbalah** frequently refers to human **Souls** as the "fruits" of the sefirot, the "**Tree of Life** "

(Bahir 14; Zohar I:15b, 19a, 33a). Other associations with Jewish occult lore include the following:

Apples: Apples are a symbol of occult knowledge; the mystics and philosophers speak of secret **wisdom** as "golden apples concealed in silver filigrees." The state of enlightenment is known as the orchard of holy apples.

Figs: Fig is the fruit most widely regarded by the Sages to have been the forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil eaten by **Adam** and **Eve**. This is because only a few verses later it is described how God made **garments** of fig leaves (Gen. 3:7). According to **Talmud**, Berachot 40a, consuming the leaves of the Tree of Knowledge is the source of the knowledge of **sorcery**. Hechalot text includes a **ritual** for summoning the Sar ha-Torah that involves writing an incantation on a fig leaf and then eating it.

Grapes: According to some, grapes were the forbidden fruit Eve ate in the Garden. More notoriety comes with **Noah**, who was the first to plant vines and brew wine from its fruits (Gen. 9). The twelve spies sent by **Moses** into Canaan brought back a cluster so big that two men had to carry it (Num. 13). Because of that association, grapes are a symbol of bounty and joy, and as a result, grapes are one of the foods that has been given its own blessing to be recited before it is eaten. In the **World to Come** each grape will grow so large it will require a wagon to transport it. People will tap each grape as one would a barrel and no less than thirty kegs of wine will flow from each (Ket. 111b).

Pomegranates: The pomegranate is a symbol for the Torah, because it supposedly contains 613 seeds, equaling the number of **commandments** in the Five Books of Moses (Chag. 15b). Pomegranates decorated both the **Temple** and the robes of the **priests**. It is eaten during the High Holidays in the hope that the coming years will be as full of blessings as the fruit is full of seeds.

Fumigation: A technique for EXORCISM, entailing exposing the spirit to **incense** or a noxious smoke, such as sulfur (*Shushan Yesod ha-Olam; Divrei Yosef*).

[contents]

G



Gabirol, Solomon: Philosopher and poet (Spanish, ca. 11th century). Jewish occult tradition credits him with creating either a female **golem** or a mechanical automaton.[1]

1. Y. Liebes, "Rabbi Solomon ibn Gabirol's Use of Sefer Yetzirah," *Jerusalem Studies 6* (1987) [Hebrew]: 104–105.

Gabriel: (גבריאל). "Mighty One of God." One of the four high angels that surround the **Throne of Glory**, Gabriel is a **seraf**, and a fiery angel, who stands at the left hand of God (Num. R. 2:10). He is the **Angel** of revelation, a role he fills in Christian and Islamic traditions also, as well as the Prince of **fire** (I Enoch; Deut. R. 5). He can also function as a *piskonit,* an advocate who questions God's

decrees. The same passage identifies his functions as “advocate, sealer, and locker” (Sanh. 44b). He is one of the swiftest angels, but not as fast as **Michael** (Ber. 4b).



The angel Gabriel by E. M. Lilien

He and Michael functioned as the witnesses at the **Wedding** of **Adam** and **Eve**, and he is one of the three angels who appear to **Abraham** bearing news of the birth of **Isaac** (Gen. 18; Mak. 86b). Of those three, it was Gabriel who destroyed Sodom in a rain of fire (Gen. R. 50:2; B.M. 86b). He was the “man” who directed **Joseph** to find his brothers, and in doing so, rendezvous with his destiny (Zohar I:184a). Gabriel also had a role in the Tamar-Judah affair in Genesis 38 (Sot. 10b). He brought revelations to and defended **Daniel** (Dan. 8–9; Meg. 3a; Sanh. 93b–94a; Yoma 77a).

Some traditions (though not all) identify him as the angel who wrestled **Jacob**. In one tradition, he is the angel who establishes Rome as a punishment for Israel, while in other versions of the same legend it is **Michael** (Shab. 56b; Sanh. 21b). He can act as an **Angel of Death** (Deut. R. 11:10). He can also function as a guardian angel; he nursed the infant Abraham through his finger, protected **Israel** in **Egypt**, and aided the infant **Moses** (Yalkut Ex.; Sot. 12b). He has other roles in human affairs also (Sanh. 44b; Shab. 55a).

He is one of the four guardian angels invoked for protection in the bedtime **ritual** of the kriat sh’ma al shemittah. The **color red** is linked to Gabriel, signifying that he is a manifestation of God’s **judgment** and linked to the Sefirah

of Yesod (*Sitrei Torah*, Zohar I:99a). **dreams** are transmitted by Gabriel. He also clarifies the meaning of **visions** (Zohar I:149b). *SEE* ANGELUS INTERPRES.

Gad: (גד). This **Hebrew** word can have two fundamental meanings: "Luck" or "fortune." Personified as a deity by the ancients, devotees would make **food** offerings to him (Gen. 30:11; Isa. 65:11; Shab. 67b). Invoking the power of Gad continued among Jews even after this idolatrous associate was forgotten, much like we today still speak of "luck" as a force or entity.

One of the twelve tribes of Israel. There are no esoteric or legendary traditions involving Gad that this writer has found to date. *SEE* DARGESH.

Gad the Seer: Advisor to King **David**. He is the purported author of a book of heavenly revelations. *SEE* WORDS OF GAD THE SEER, THE.

Galgaliel: (גלגליאל). "Cycle of God." The **Angel** of the **sun** (I Enoch; III Enoch 17).

Galgalim: (גלגלים). "Cycles/whirlwinds." A class of **Angels** mentioned in Hechalot Rabbati.

Galitzur: (גליצור). An **Angel** known as "the revealer of the meaning of **Torah**" mentioned in Sefer Raziel. He is one of the angels that ministers before the **Throne of Glory**. His wings protect the other attending angels from the fiery breath of the **Chayyot** (PR 20:4). He is at times identified with the angel **Raziel** (*Malachei Elyon*, 180) *SEE* SAR HA-TORAH.

Galya Raza: "Revelation of a **secret**." A Kabbalistic tract on reincarnation, this anonymous 16th-century work provides an elaborate Gnostic-flavored theory of **Creation** and the dominion of **evil** over the universe as a framework for its teachings about transmigration of **Souls**. It contains perhaps the most pessimistic interpretation of Creation to be found in a Jewish religious work since the apocalyptic writings.[1] *SEE* GNOSTICISM; REINCARNATION.

1. L. Fine, ed., *Essential Papers on Kabbalah* (New York: NYU Press, 1995), 243–69.

Garden of Eden: *SEE* EDEN, GARDEN OF.

Garlic: Medievals included garlic, a multipurpose herb, in remedies to treat toothaches and epilepsy. Roasted garlic is an aid for virility. Garlic also has demon-repelling qualities—some could be hung in the doorway of a house

(along with a rooster head) as an **amulet** to protect a newborn.[1] **Chayyim Vital** included it in an alchemical formula for making silver.

1. Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors*, 145.

Garment: (בגד/*Beged*, מלבוש/*Malbush; Chaluk*). "Garment" is the term used in **Kabbalah** to refer to the barriers that protect the material world from being dissolved by the power of greater spiritual realities. Thus the **Zohar** teaches that the **Torah** we have on **Earth**, consisting of texts, stories, laws, etc., is really only the "garment of Torah." The real, spiritual Torah is simply beyond the grasp of material beings, so it needs to be "clothed" for us to experience it (I: 134a; III:36a).

God, too, has "garments," variously identified as God's **glory** or Chashmal (the untranslatable substance **Ezekiel** sees at the center of the divine **chariot**). God is described in the **Bible** as wearing **light** as a garment (Ps. 104:2; Isa. 6). Hechalot Rabbati describes a divine robe of light that is covered all over with the **Tetragrammaton**. The Sages link this idea of God's garment to **Creation**, suggesting that, in a sense, God "wears" the universe (Gen. R. 3:4; Ex. R. 15, 22; PdRE 3; PdRK 22:5; Zohar III:273a).[1]

There are a few references in tradition to magical garments among humans. There are, for example, the legendary garments of Adam, but there is also a mysterious cape or mantle described in Sefer ha-Malbush, "The Book of the Garment." The mantle, made from deer skin and covered in divine names and then activated in an occult **ritual** at water-side, grants the adept magical powers. Practical Kabbalists sometimes dress in colored garments appropriate to the sefirah they are attempting to magically access.[2] *SEE* EMANATION; FRINGES.

1. Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 2, 169. Also see E. Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in Classical Kabbalah* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press), 1989.

2. Idel, *Hasidism*, 198, 369–70.

Garments of Adam: Prior to the expulsion from **Eden**, **Adam** and **Eve** had bodies of **light**, or were sheathed in light (Gen. R. 20:12; Zohar I:36b; Zohar II:229b). Following the expulsion, God made them garments (Gen. 3:21), because they were stripped of the protective **glory** they had worn in the Garden (PdRE 14). Since the **Bible** describes the garments as made out of unspecified "skins," one legend claims they were made out of the skin of the **serpent** (*Targum Yerushalmi*, Gen. 3:7; 21), while another claims it was from **Leviathan** (*Sefer Minchat Yehudah*, Gen. 3:21; PdRE 20). These miraculous clothes allowed anybody wearing them to hunt and capture **animals** at will. They were

permeated with the fragrance of Eden and never wore out. They passed from Adam through his descendants to King Nimrod. **Esau** took the garments from Nimrod when he slew the king (Gen. R. 63:13, 65:16–22; PdRE 24; Zohar I:74b). These were the same garments that **Jacob** wore to fool his blind father, **Isaac**, into thinking he was Esau. Even then, the garments still bore the unique scent of the Garden of Eden, which helped in the deception. Jacob was the last recorded owner of the garments (Gen. 27:27; Gen. R. 65:11; Tanh. Toldot 6:10; Zohar I:224b).

Some passages of the **Zohar** treat the garments of Adam as entirely allegory; a reference to being "clothed" in good deeds, in the promise of **resurrection**, or to the **sefirot** (I: 142b; 224a–b). *SEE* GARMENT.

Gate: (שער/*Sha'ar,* also *Delet*). A gateway is emblematic of access to celestial and underworld realms (Gen. 28:7; Pss. 24, 78). "Gates" as a metaphor for drawing close to God is also already evident in the **psalms** (118:19). There are five gates by which one may enter the divine realms and three that lead to **Gehenna** (Zohar I:1a). Heaven is filled with doors through which **Prayers** and deeds ascend (Ber. 32b; B.M. 59a; *Gedulat Moshe*).

Doors and gates are also liminal points by which **demons** and spirits may enter a home (Gen. 4:7). In the **Exodus**, smearing **blood** on the doorways of a dwelling created a barrier between the spirit of destruction able to move freely in the world and human habitations. Since the giving of the **Torah**, scriptures affixed to a doorway in a **mezuzah** serve the same function (J. Pes. 15d; A.Z. 11a). **incantation bowls** would be buried under a threshold to prevent entry by demons.

Gate of Mercy: (*Sha'ar Rachamim*). Known as the "Golden Gate" to the Arabs, it is a walled-over entryway on the east wall of the **Temple** platform. There is another passageway next to it known as the gate of repentance. The divine Presence once entered through it before the **exile** (Ezek. 44:1–3). At the end of time, **Angels** will finally open them both. Another tradition teaches that the original gate of **Solomon's Temple** sank below the **Earth** and will rise up along with the resurrected **Souls** at the end of time (Lam. R. 2:13). Through this gate the **Messiah** will enter **Jerusalem**.[1]

1. Z. Vilnay, *Legends of Jerusalem* (Philadelphia, PA: JPS, 1975), 54–56.

Gathering Spirits, Book of: (*Sefer Kevitzat ha-Ruchot*). This short book is an early medieval manual for gathering and controlling demons.

Gay: (גיא). “Valley.” In the **Zohar**, it refers to a mysterious underworld dimension of the material world that links the **Earth** to the punishing afterlife (Ps. 23; *Sitrei Torah*, Zohar I:253b–254a). *SEE* GEHENNA.

Gedi: (גדי). “Kid.” The **Hebrew** word for the **zodiac** sign Capricorn. It is linked to the month of Tevet, which is a winter month in the **Land of Israel**. A fast day is observed on the tenth of the month, marking the beginning of the siege of **Jerusalem** by the Romans. It signifies **sleep** and dormancy, but also renewal and new birth (Tanh. 1). It is also the sign associated with **Jacob** (Es. R. 7:11).[1] *SEE* GOAT.

1. Erlanger, *Signs of the Times*, 199–226.

Gedulah: (גדולה). “Greatness.” Another term for the sefirah of **Chesed**. *SEE* SEFIROT.

Gedulat Moshe: “Greatness of Moses.” A medieval text describing the afterlife. In it, **Metatron** and other **Angels** give **Moses** a tour of **Gehenna** and the **seven heavens**.

Gehazi: The servant of the **Prophet** Elisha was a man of bad judgment and weak faith. When the prophet commissioned him to take his rod and go resurrect the son of the Shunammite woman, Gehazi first tested the staff on a dead dog. The staff worked, but then lost its power, forcing Elisha to go personally to perform the **miracle** (2 Kings 5). Gehazi was punished by being afflicted with leprosy (*Mid. Aseret ha-Dibrot*). Later he helps King Jeroboam commit the **sin** of building golden calves for his sanctuary in the northern kingdom of Israel (Sot. 47a; MdRI Amalek 1). For this offense, he is counted as one of the few who will have no place in the **World to Come** (Sanh. 105a). By contrast, Hasidic tradition claims he was reincarnated as a **dog** (*Shivhei ha-BeSHT*).

Gehenna/Gehinnom: (גהנום/derived from *Gay Hinnom*). “The Valley of Hinnom.” Hell; the punishing afterlife.

Originally the word referred to the valley on the west side of the Old City of **Jerusalem**. Because in biblical time the valley was the site of Pagan worship, including the tophets for child sacrifice, the term has become synonymous with **evil**, and it is imagined to be the location of a gate to hell, *Gehinnom*, or in its Greek iteration, *Gehenna*.

Aside from the book of Daniel, the Hebrew **Bible** is virtually silent on the topic of a punishing afterlife. **I Enoch** gives the first detailed description of

Gehenna as an abysmal furnace where the wicked are fettered in burdening chains and tormented by fire. Interestingly, Enoch provides conflicting testimony as to the duration of this suffering. Some passages suggest that the punishments of Gehenna will last until the final **judgment**, when it will give up its dead, while other verses indicate the wicked are eventually completely consumed by its fires and annihilated (I Enoch 51, 63, 56).

The exact nature of Gehenna varies from text to text and tradition to tradition. It should come as no surprise that a vast fiery furnace (inspired by a description in Daniel) filled with coal, pitch, and sulfur is the most popular image (Pes. 94a). One text claims there are no less than five different kinds of fire burning there. Bitter cold and pervasive darkness is also a common motif, a theme first appearing in II Enoch, which distinguishes between compartments of fiery and icy retribution. Rabbinic literature describes the punishments of Gehenna as alternating fire and ice (PdRK 10:4; J. Sanh. 10:3).

Gehenna came into existence on the second day of Creation, which is why that is the only day which God does not declare "good" (Pes. 54a, based on Gen. 1; Ned. 39b). There are three gates to Gehenna guarded by three angelic princes: Kipod, Nasagiel, and **Samael**. One gate opens to the desert, another to the sea, and the third to the valley of Ben Hinnom outside Jerusalem (Eruv. 19a; BhM 2:30). In the **Zohar**, Gehenna is a byproduct of the left side of the sefirotic **emanations**. According to Gedulat Moshe, Gehenna is a living entity that eternally hungers for the **Souls** of the righteous, a hunger that can never be sated.

According to Masekhet Gehinnom, Gehenna is divided into seven precincts (*madori*) or **palaces**. The seven compartments of hell are Sheol, Abaddon, Beer Shachat, Bor She'on, Tit ha-Yeven, **Domah**, and Tevel. The *Nahar deNur*, the river of Light that flows from under the **Throne of Glory**, separates Gehenna from the **seven heavens**. Many other rivers—streams of gall, pitch, and **poison**—flow from precinct to precinct (Sot. 10b; Mid. Teh. 11:6–7; Zohar I:62b).

Each compartment contains its own team of punishing angels headed by a princely angel, and each has its own unique punishments intended for specific kinds of sins: those who denied succor to the poor dwell in icy misery, slanderers hang by their tongues, etc. Some souls experience repeated cycles of horrific destruction and painful reconstruction, but everyone is spared for the duration of the **Sabbath** (except the Sabbath desecrators) (Sanh. 65b; Gen. R. 11.5; PR 23:8). Some precincts are reserved exclusively for the sinful gentile **nations**, such as the seven Canaanite nations and the Romans.

The most striking aspect of what emerges out the Second Temple Period is the radical divide from the Christian and Islamic versions of the punishing afterlife: Judaism rejects that punishment endures for all eternity. Taking the rather unqualified biblical statement, "The dust returns to the **Earth** as it was, while the spirit returns to God who gave it," at its word, the Talmudic era Sages conclude that punishment is transitory. Despite the enthusiastic endorsement it receives in pseudepigraphic writings, the Rabbi reject eternal punishment as incongruent with a God who is both just (infinite punishment for a finite life of sin?) and compassionate. There is also an element of God being conscious of sharing responsibility for our moral shortcoming. God designed us with this potential to **sin** built in, so how can the Creator totally fault the creation for acting within specs? (see RaSHI's commentary on Chagigah 15b,* for example, or the famous parable on **Cain** and Able in Genesis Rabbah 22:9).

The **Talmud** specifically limits the time that souls must spend in Gehenna to a maximum of twelve terrestrial months:

> Rabbi Akiba said: The duration of the punishment of the wicked in Gehinnom is twelve months. (Shab. 33b)

This conclusion is not arrived at spontaneously. The Talmud preserves a series of textual duals that established this doctrine:

> R. Joshua b. Levi stated: Gehinnom has seven names, and they are: Nether-world (or "Sheol"), Destruction, Pit (or, "'pit of destruction"), Tumultuous Pit, Miry Clay, Shadow of Death and the Underworld … [it is demonstrated each name appears in the TaNaKH] … But are there no more [names]? Is there not in fact that of Gehinnom? [This means,] a valley that is as deep as the valley of Hinnom and into which all go down for gratuitous acts … whosoever is enticed by his evil inclination will fall therein. (Eruv. 19b)
>
> Beit Shammai taught: There are three groups—one is destined for eternal life, another consigned to eternal ignominy and eternal abhorrence (these are the thoroughly wicked), while those whose deeds are balanced will go down to Gehinnom, but when they scream they will ascend from there and be healed … but Beit Hillel taught: "[God is] rich in kindness" (Ex. 34:6). [He is] inclined toward mercy. (T. Sanh. 13:3)

This argument is in relation to the most wicked of all—the generation that drove God to undo creation:

> The generation of the Flood have no share in the World to Come (see M. Sanh. 10:3) "The judgment on the generation of the Flood was for twelve

> months, on Job for twelve months, on the Egyptians for twelve months, on Gog and Magog in the Hereafter for twelve months, and on the wicked in Gehinnom for twelve months" (M. *Eduyot* 2:10). [In the end, Hillel's opinion prevails.]

These issues are reiterated and resolved in the say way in the **Midrash** (Gen. R. 28:8, 33:7; *Seder Olam ha-Ba*). Jewish hell is about remorse, whereas Christian and Islamic notions of hell are all about despair. If there are any unredeemable souls, their fate is annihilation and nonbeing, not eternal torment:

> After 12 months, their body is consumed and their soul is burned and the **wind** scatters them under the soles of the feet of the righteous. (R.H. 17a)

Occasionally, one can find a dissenting opinion about the duration of Gehenna:

> The wicked stay in Gehinnom till the resurrection, and then the Messiah, passing through it redeems them. (*Emek ha-Melech***,** f. 138, 4)

In addition, the tradition tells us that souls in Gehenna also get Shabbat and holidays off (Sanh. 65b). In tractate Berachot, the Sages can only think of seven individuals of the biblical period who would merit such harsh treatment. After many excruciating months of purgative suffering, the souls are finally reduced to ash and their purified essence now awaits the **resurrection**. Sometimes famous biblical evildoers, for whom there is no redemption, are associated with a specific level of Gehenna.[1]

In III Enoch and subsequent writings, we again see the concept that souls are divided into three categories, though this is slightly different than the three listed in Talmud: the **Righteous**, the wicked, and the beinonim, "in-betweens," the bulk of humanity who have both merits and sins recorded in the **Book of Life**. The conditions and duration of the soul's sojourn in Gehenna depends on which category one belongs to. It is interesting to note that the righteous must appear there, but just long enough to plead on behalf of the sinners and use their merit to ease their punishments (B.B. 84a; Tam. 32b; Shab. 152b; Suk. 32b; Ex. R. 51:7; PR 41:3; *Mid. Ruth* 79b; Tanh. Noah 1, Bo 2).

The key to avoiding Gehenna is one's actions. Unlike **Christianity** and Islam, in which salvation hinges on a certain gnosis and/or adherence to a universal doctrine, Judaism uses this criteria:

> He who has Torah, good deeds, humility, and fear of heaven will be spared from punishment [in Gehinnom]. (PR 50:1)

Therefore **Maimonides** could declare: “The pious of all nations will have a potion in the **World to Come**” (*Yad*, Teshuvah 3.5).

1. R. Patai, *Gates to the Old City: A Book of Jewish Legends* (New York: Avon Books, 1980), 277–81; also see Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*.

Gematria: (גמטריה). “Calculations/Numerology.” Gematria is a complex hermeneutic technique in which **numbers** are used to reveal messages in texts and thereby derive insight into the order of the universe.

In the **Hebrew alphabet**, each letter possesses a numeric value: *alef* = 1; *bet* = 2; *gimel* = 3; *dalet* = 4; *hay* = 5; *vav* = 6; *ziyan* = 7; *chet* = 8; *tet* = 9; *yud* = 10; *kaf* = 20; *lamed* = 30; *mem* = 40; *nun* = 50; *samech* = 60; *ayin* = 70; *payh* = 80; *tzadi* = 90; *kuf* = 100; *resh* = 200; *shin* = 300; and *tav* = 400. Some methods also assign additional numeric values to the “final forms” of the letters *mem*, *nun*, *tzadi*, *payh*, and *kaf* (in Hebrew orthography, the shapes of these five letters change when they appear at the end of a word). Gematria involves calculating the value of letters, names, words, and phrases, and then deriving homiletic or occult meaning from the numbers, often by matching them to words and phrases of equivalent value.

Interpretation via numerology is accepted among the thirty-two hermeneutic rules of the **Torah** laid down by the Talmudic Sages. The theosophical basis for gematria is first articulated in Sefer Yetzirah. There it is taught that numbers, like the Hebrew alphabet, are the hylic matter from which God constructs the universe. Therefore numeric relationships, especially those that appear in the **language** of Scripture, are not accidental or coincidental. Rather, such equivalencies reveal key interrelations in the structure of God’s universe and hidden creative potentials.

A preoccupation with hidden number relationships is clearly evident in the Torah itself. Thus, for instance, there are precisely seven words in the first verse of Genesis, equaling the seven days of **Creation**. Perhaps the most famous example is one revealed in the Talmudic interpretation of Genesis 14:14, in which **Abraham** took 318 retainers with him to rescue his nephew Lot from an army of marauding kings:

> “And he armed his trained servants, born in his own house …” Rab said; he equipped them by [teaching them] the Torah. “Three hundred and eighteen …” R. Ammi b. Abba said: “Eliezer outweighed them all. Others say, It was [only] Eliezer [Abraham took with him] for this [318] is the numerical value of his name.” (Ned. 32b)

The extraordinary nature of this correlation is further enhanced when one realizes that “Eliezer” is a theophoric name meaning “My God is a help,” implying that Abraham rescued **Lot** from the armies of four kings with God’s aid alone. Other example of Talmudic homilies built around gematria can be found in Shabbat 145b; Yoma 54a; *Nazir* 5a; Eruvin 65a; Sanhedrin 38a; and Avot 3:18.

More sophisticated methods of finding meaning in Scripture soon emerged. From the first words of Exodus 35:1, Rabbi Nathan derived that there are thirty-nine categories of forbidden labor on the **Sabbath**. Another Sage notes that since there are 613 **commandments** in the Torah yet the word “Torah,” only equals 611, which reveals to us that the first two commandments God spoke at **Mount Sinai** were heard directly by the people, while all the rest came through the agency of **Moses**.

While rabbinic use of gematria was relatively infrequent, it was much more appealing to the medieval mystics, the **German Pietist**, and the Kabbalists, for gematria appealed to their interest for occult revelation.

The medieval text Tikkunei Zohar endorses four hermeneutic methods of calculation: absolute values (straight equivalency), ordinal values (valuing each letter 1–22, thus *mem* = 12, *shin* = 21), reduced values (letters with values of 1, 10, or 100 are revalued at “1”; 2, 20, or 200 at “2,”etc., so that there are only nine values), and integral reduced values (each letter of a word is valued at one, up to a maximum of nine for a nine-letter word). Together these four methods coincide with the four-letter **name of God** and the four worlds. Later traditions listed even more methods, as many as seventy-five.

While gematria has little authority in determining Jewish **law**, it plays a significant role in Jewish esoteric teachings and is a staple element of **Kabbalah**. The German Pietists had a deep interest in the numeric values concealed in both Scripture and Jewish **Prayer** texts. They also devoted much reflection to the numeric values of angelic and divine names. It is interesting to note that occult interest in numerology helped spur the standardization of the wording for the **siddur**, with spellings being fixed, in part, based on the gematria value that they yielded.

Classical Kabbalah elaborates even further on these practices. Works by mystics such as Joseph Gikkatilla and Abraham Abulafia also overflow with numerology. **Chasidism** found much value in numerology, and many Chasidic sermons and writings hinge on numerological interpretations.

Gematriaot, Sefer: A medieval book of protective magical procedures. It includes the prophylactic and theurgic use of Scriptural verses, magical formulae, and the **healing** power of **gemstones**.

Gemstones: Precious and semiprecious stones have been used as sources of occult power throughout human history. The ancient Mesopotamians spoke of an *elmeshu* stone that the gods used for **divination**.[1] Alchemists claim the legendary **philosopher's stone** made it possible to turn lead to **gold**. Jews, too, have many occult traditions related to gemstones, and their power is suggested in the Latin proverb, *Judaeos fidem in lapidibus pretiosis, et Paganos in herbis ponere* ("Jews put their trust in precious stones and Pagans in herbs").

The most famous gems mentioned in the **Bible** are the twelve stones, set in three columns of four rows, in the breastplate of the High **priest**. Miraculous properties have been ascribed to the twelve stones, primarily as tools in divination. Since the exact translation of Bible mineralogical terms is now lost, there are multiple conflicting lists for the stones that were actually used. This list comes from the medieval text Sefer ha-Gematriaot:

Odem (Ruby) has many benefits for **fertility**—it enhances male potency, prevents miscarriage, and eases labor pangs.

Pitdah (Topaz) combats fevers and is also useful in **love** potions and rituals.

Bareket (Carbuncle) sharpens the mind and combats the effects of old age.

Tarshish (Beryl) helps digestion.

Nofech (Jade, Emerald, or Carbuncle) enhances strength and courage.

Sapir (Sapphire) has medicinal value, especially in treatment of the **eyes**.

Yahalom (Emerald) is a good luck charm and a sleep aid.

Leshem (Jacinth) can be used for scrying.

Shebo (Agate) keeps a person secure and stable on foot or on horseback.

Shoham (Onyx) is a charm that will gain favor for the wearer.

Ahlamah (Amethyst) increases physical courage and is a phylactery against evil spirits.

Yashfeh (Jasper) is useful in keeping one from revealing secrets and in curbing ardor.[2]

Other gems of power also appear in Jewish narratives. Jonah, for example, discovered a pearl that gave off light, illuminating the interior of the fish that

swallowed him. Perhaps the most famous gemstone is the **tzohar**, a fragment of supernal light given to **Adam** and his descendants. Those who possessed it could access many occult powers. Some legends claim the First **Temple** was studded in gems, while many images of the heavenly **Jerusalem** and **Eden**describe the walls and structures of these places as being built from precious stones. *SEE* URIM AND THUMMIM.

1. H. Rawlinson, *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, vol. IV (London: British Museum, 1894), 18, no. 3.

2. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 265–67.

Genesis Rabbah: (*Bereshit Rabbah*). One of the most influential collections of the **Midrash**. Entirely devoted to the book of Genesis, the work contains many fantastic traditions concerning **Creation**, the mythic past, and biblical figures and events.

Geomancy: (גורל החול/*Goral ha-Chol*). **divination** using rocks, pebbles, and/or sand. Stones are cast on a smooth surface—paper or a tabletop—and the resulting patterns are interpreted. Chayyim Vital describes a consultation with a witch who used geomancy to summon divinatory **demons** (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot* 21). The most influential and complete of these texts is the anthology of geomancy divination texts, collectively known as *Sefer ha-Goralot ha-Chol* “The Book of Fates of Sand” by Shalom Shabbazi (Yemen, 17th century). Others of these works are attributed to notable figures such as Sa’adia Gaon and Ibn Ezra. Most of these documents combine the practice with either **astrology** or **gematria** of a type derived from Islamic divination.[1] *SEE* GEMSTONES.; ROCK; URIM AND THUMMIM.

1. H. Goodman, “Geomancy Texts of Rabbi Shalom Shabazi,” *Proceedings of the Second International Congress, Institute of Semitic Studies*, Princeton University, 1999, 1–8.

German Pietists: (*Chasidei Ashkenaz*). This mystical pietist sect of 12th–13th century Rhineland was one of the most important esoteric movements in Jewish history, as well as a major source of Jewish magical and occult traditions. Most of the major figures were related familially, being branches of the Kalonymus family that moved north from Italy. They are now regarded to have been a major conduit of transferring Jewish esoteric traditions of Mediterranean and Asian antiquity to Europe. Drawing inspiration from the **Hechalot** literature, Sefer Yetzirah, and the esoteric teachings they collected and preserved, this small mystical brotherhood among the Rhineland communities of what would become France and Germany expounded many new insights and added new practices to Jewish life based on their beliefs. Their central theological premise was that the

Pleroma was distinguished into three emanating levels: the unknowable God (the *Deus absconditus*), the upper **glory** (*Kavod*), and the lower Glory. Only the two glories interact with the created order.

Their esoteric interests were closely bound up with the numeric **mysticism** of gematria. They also had a keen interest in contemplative practices, **Angels** and **demons**, dream divination, and practical theurgy. Key figures include Samuel ben Kalonymus he-Chasid, Eleazar ben Judah of Worms, Abraham ben Azriel, and Judah ben Samuel he-Chasid, the last being the author of the major work of the Pietist tradition, Sefer Chasidim, the "Book of the Pious." They also made significant contributions to the development of Jewish liturgy, standardizing **Prayers** to better comport with their mystical theories. One of their great contributions was the erotic paean to God, Shir ha-Kavod, which many congregations still recite at the close of Shabbat services.[1] *SEE* GEMATRIA; TOSAFISTS.

1. Hayem Soloveitchik, "Piety, Pietism, and German Pietism," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* Nos. 3–4 (January–April, 2002): 455–493.

Gerona Kabbalists: The city of Gerona in northern Spain became the center of mystical teachings during the 13th and 14th centuries. A colony of the Provencal Kabbalists influenced by many of the same texts that compelled the **German Pietist**, the Kabbalists of Gerona developed their own unique vocabulary of theosophical symbols. They also infused their metaphysical traditions with scholastic philosophy and applied their ideas to create a genre of esoterically inspired ethics. The Gerona circle produced the influential mystics Azriel and Ezra of Gerona, Nachmanides, and Jacob ben Sheshet Gerondi.[1]

1. J. Dan, *Jewish Mysticism and Jewish Ethics* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aonson, 1977).

Gerushin: (גרושין). "Divorce/exile [from the material]." A **meditation** technique espoused by Elijah de Vidas and Moses Cordovero entailing long periods of isolation, either by wandering in isolated landscapes or remaining at the graveside of a righteous man, to achieve mystical insights (*Sefer ha-Gerushin; Or Yakar* 13:75*; Sha'ar Ruach ha-Kodesh*). As this passage indicates, "isolation" is a relative term. As is so often the case in Jewish **mysticism**, this is a group discipline:

> What I and others have experienced in connection with *gerushin*, when we wandered in the fields … discussing verses from the Bible suddenly, without previous reflection. On these occasions, new ideas would come to us in a

manner that cannot be believed unless one has seen or experienced it many times. (*Or Ne'erav,* part 5, chap. 2) [1]

The preeminent goal seems to be to receive mystical insight into scriptures and the meaning of Jewish symbols and rituals. *SEE* DEATH; INCUBATION; MEDIUM; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY

1. M. Hallamish, *An Introduction to Kabbalah* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999), 84.

Gervasius, Julius: German alchemist (ca. 18th century). Some historians claim that, writing under the nom de plume of Abraham Eleazar, Gervasius composed *Uraltes Chymisches Werk*, a famous book of **Alchemy**. This theory, while interesting, really has no more going for it than the more straightforward conclusion that the named author of the book is also the actual author.

Get: (גט). "Divorce certificate." Intriguingly, a number of Jewish EXORCISM techniques use the **language** of Jewish **law** in their dealings with the demonic. Thus there are several **incantation bowls** inscribed with **incantations** written in the form of a *get*, a certificate of divorce.[1] Such "spirit gets" are directed against any **Lilith** or **succubus** that has been sexually tormenting a male victim. *SEE* JOSHUA BEN PERACHIA.

1. Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 17–18, 27, 159–61.

Gevul, Sefer ha-: A commentary on the **Zohar** by Judah ben Samuel he-Chasid.

Gevurah: "Power/*dynamis*." The fifth sefirah and the principle of divine justice, power, fear, and even terror. It is the left arm of the macrocosmic Anthropos. Thus, it is also the source of the cosmological "left side"—**evil**, destructiveness, cruelty, and the demonic in **Creation**. It is the point from which **Lilith** emerges. It must be balanced by the forces of **Chesed**, abundant **love**. It is a feminine principle yet is personified, ironically, in the lower worlds by the **Patriarch Isaac**. He is so linked to it because he willingly accepted the severe decree that he be **sacrifices** by his father. It is symbolized by the color red.[1] *SEE* SEFIROT.

1. D. Matt, trans., *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition, vol. 1 (*Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004–2013), L.

Ghost: (רפא/*Rafa,* also *Ruach; ha-Met*). The idea that spirits of the dead can continue to dwell among the living is an ancient Jewish belief. Most ghosts in Jewish tradition are either **Souls** of the dead who have not yet made the transition into the **World to Come**, or are spirits that are somehow disturbed or summoned by the living. The only ghost story found in the **Bible** describes how the ghost of the **Prophet Samuel** is temporarily summoned from the realm of the

dead for the purposes of a séance (2 Sam. 28).

Rabbinic literature, by contrast, is replete with ghost stories. It is possible for the pious among the living to hear the ghosts of the dead conversing in the **cemetery** at **night** (Ber. 18b). The dead can communicate with both the living (B.B. 58a; Pes. 113b; M.K. 28a) and the divine realms (B.M. 85b). They are a source of knowledge for all that transpires in the world (PdRE 34). In rabbinic and medieval accounts, ghosts are usually limited to appearing in a **dream** or lurking within the confines of a graveyard (*SCh* 452, 709–10, 728), though there is one exceptional story in which the spirit is free to come to visit the living wherever they may be (*SCh* 170). Later belief held that ghosts could move more freely, but needed to find a living host, thus becoming an ibbur or dybbuk (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot* 22–24; *Nishmat Chayyim* 3:11; 4:10). Ghosts can take a variety of forms, human or **animal** (*Ma'asei ha-Shem*). **Chasidism** has many tales of dead spirits visiting and dwelling among the living (*ShB* 100). *SEE* BURIAL.; DEATH; EXORCISM; MIDNIGHT; NECROMANCER NECROMANCY; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY.

Ghoul: *SEE* CANNIBALISM; VAMPIRE.; WEREWOLF.

Giants: (נפילים/*Nefilim,* also *Refaim; Gibborim; Emim;* and *Anakim*). In common with other world cultures, many stories of an ancient race of giants appear in Jewish tradition. The basis for the tradition of a race of giants is Genesis 6:4, the same *locus classicus* for the tradition of **fallen angels**. The angels came down and took wives among mortals. The giants were either around at the time of those events, or the offspring of those unions (the phrasing of the Hebrew in Genesis 6 is ambiguous): "The nefilim were on the earth in those days …" This may suggest that the Nefilim were there when the angels arrived. Part of the confusion arises over the word *nefilim,* which at first glance looks like a noun derived from the verb *nafal,* "fell," suggesting that *nefilim* means something like "the fallen." Many modern scholars point out the spelling of *nefilim* is not correct for that kind of derivation, and the word more likely simply means "giants."

Genesis 6:4 may be intended to account for the stories about mythological heroes well-known throughout the ancient Near East, "these were the gibborim [heroes, superheroes, demigods?] of old, the men of renown." However underdefined the language of Genesis, the earliest translations of the **Bible**, the Septuagint and the **Targum**, assumes Genesis is talking about gargantuanism, translating both *nefilim* and *gibborim* as "giants."

Variously known as the *Nefilim* [traditionally spelled “Nephilim” in English] (Num. 13:32–33), the “children of Anak” (Ibid., Deut. 9:2), the *Emim* (Deut. 2:10–11, 21), the “children of Hor” (Ibid.), and the *Refaim* (Ibid., 2 Sam. 21:16–22), the giants were prevalent enough that the spies saw them throughout their scouting of Canaan, “we saw men of giant stature … we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers …” (Num. 13:32) and **Moses** repeatedly alludes to them in Deuteronomy, most notably in reference to the massive King Og of Bashan, who approached fifteen feet in height (Deut. 3:11): “Only King Og of Bashan was left remaining of the Refaim.” Apparently this was not a wholly accurate report. Hundreds of years later, **David** had to fight the giant **Goliath**, and David’s soldiers had to kill a number of them (2 Sam. 21; I Chron. 20:4–8). Perhaps the different names signified different clans within the ethnos of giants.

Post-biblical texts identify many more giants by name, including Ahijah, Hiva, and Hayya, the sons of the angel Shemchazi (*Nidd.* 61a; *Book of Giants*). The giants are consistently portrayed as violent and defiant of God. They were cannibals and, in one tradition, they were so berserk with lust that they copulated with every kind of land beast (I Enoch 10). They were, in any case, very destructive, consuming whole herds of **animals** at a sitting and generally terrorizing mankind (III *Maccabees* 2:4; I Enoch 6:2–7:5; *Mid. Abkir*; Book of Giants). It was such behaviors that helped trigger the **Flood**.

Most giants were subsequently wiped out in the deluge, but some survived, as evidenced by their continuing presence among the Canaanite and Philistine peoples. They managed to survive the Flood because Og (later king of Bashan) persuaded **Noah** to allow him on the Ark (Zev. 113a). Og finally died at the hand of Moses when he tried to destroy the Israelite encampment in the desert by hurling a mountain onto it. God caused the hollowed mountain to fall on him like a yoke, and Moses was able to slay the encumbered giant:

> He [Og] said: How large is the camp of Israel? Three parasangs. I will go and uproot a mountain of the size of three parasangs and cast it upon them and kill them. He went and uprooted a mountain of the size of three parasangs and carried it on his head. But the Holy One, blessed be He, sent ants which bored a hole in it, so that it sank around his neck. He tried to pull it off, but his teeth projected on each side [like tusks], and he could not pull it off. This is referred to in the [biblical] text, “Thou hast broken the teeth of the wicked” … The height of Moses [grew to] ten cubits. He took an axe ten cubits long, leapt ten cubits into the air, and struck Og on his ankle and killed him. (Ber. 54b. Also see Num. R. 21; Tanh. B. 55).

David and his mighty men slew the brothers Goliath and Ishbi-benob and their giantess mother, Orpah (Sanh. 95a; Gen. R. 59).

The exact dimensions of giants vary from tradition to tradition. Minimalist accounts, like those of Goliath, put them at the nine to ten foot mark, while later rabbinic literature often describes them in much grander terms (by one account twenty-three thousand ells—almost one hundred thousand feet). Often they are described with monstrous features: extra fingers and toes, multiple rows of teeth, and the like (Deut. R. 1; Chul. 60a; I Enoch 7). Some accounts break them into three classes, on the assumption that the different biblical names reflected meaningful distinctions. The Rabbis considered gigantism a potential problem even in their own days (Bik. 45b).

Giants, Book of: (*Sefer ha-Gibborim*). Apocryphal work that gives an expanded account of the race of **giants** produced by the sexual intercourse between **fallen angel** and mortals mentioned in Genesis 6:1–4. A copy of the text in **Hebrew**, preserved in fragmentary form, has been found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls** (4Q203, 1Q23, 2Q26, 4Q530–532, 6Q8). The Jewish text is believed to be the source for a more widely dispersed and influential Manichean/Gnostic version that is known by the same name. That intact Gnostic version includes an account of a war between the giants and the **host of heaven** prior to **the Flood**.

Gihon: (גחון). One of the four primordial rivers that flowed from the **Garden of Eden** (Gen. 2). It is identified with a spring that wells up in the Kidron Valley of **Jerusalem** and that has always been the city’s main water source. It was rerouted by King Hezekiah. A later legend claims it was stopped up until **Chayyim Vital** , who divined its location from a ghostly visitation of his teacher, **Isaac Luria**, reopened it. In the time of the **Messiah**, it is presumably the waters of Gihon that will flow both east and west out of Jerusalem, gradually expanding to gargantuan volumes, sweetening the waters of both the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea (Ezek. 47:1–12).

Gikkatilla, Joseph ben Abraham: Kabbalist (Spanish, ca. 13th century). A student of Abraham Abulafia, Gikkatilla composed several highly influential Kabbalistic works, including *Ginnat Egoz,* **Sha’arei Orah**, and Sha’arei Tzedek. His *Sha’arei Orah*, in particular, outlines many of the same metaphysical found in Zohar, with greater clarity.

Gilgul: (גלגול). “Rolling [Souls].” In early Jewish literature, this refers to a notion that there are underworld conduits by which the dead “migrate” to the **Land of**

Israel (Ket. 111a). In later writings (Bahir*; Sefer ha-Gilgulim*), this becomes the **Hebrew** expression for **reincarnation**. A **Soul** may undergo *gilgul* many times.

Gilgulim, Sefer ha-: "Book of Reincarnations." A treatise by **Chayyim Vital** on **reincarnation** and on the metaphysics of the various components of the **Soul**. Not to be confused with another book on the same topic by the same author, Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim.

Gimel: (ג). The third letter in the **Hebrew alphabet**, its name, *gimel*, is linked homiletically to the word *gimilut*, which means "bestowal/reward," an act of beneficence. Thus it signifies **charity** and kindness. Its shape represents the divine flow of goodness that pours down to the universe from on high (*Magen David*). Its numeric value is three.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 55–70.

Girdles of Job: Three belts or cords of divine craftsmanship. Mentioned in the Greek language *Testament of Job*, these girdles were given to **Job** by God (Job 38:3), curing him of all his ailments and granting him knowledge of future events (why Job needed three is not explained). At his death, Job gave the sashes to his three daughters by Dinah, his second wife: Yemima, Ketziah and Keren-Happuch. The belts are described as:

> ... Three-stringed girdles about the appearance of which no man can speak; For they were not earthly work, but celestial sparks of light flashed through them like the rays of the sun. (*Testment of Job*, 47) [1]

Job assured them the garments would act as **amulet**s, protecting them from external dangers and transforming their **hearts**. When the daughters secured the golden girdles across their chests (over their hearts?), the **women** knew the **language** of angels and sang praises in celestial tongues. So girded, they were also relieved of all worldly fears (*Testament of Job*, Chapters 46–53).

1. M. R. James, trans., *The Testament of Job* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897).

Glory: (כבוד/*Kavod*). Glory is one of several terms, alongside *Shem*, Shekhinah, and Holy Spirit/*Ruach Elohim*, that signifies God's manifest presence. Following a long-standing literary topos of divinity in the ancient Near East, Glory is often a kind of aureola; the visible, even corporeal, appearance of divinity (Lev 9:23). Humanity may also possess *kavod*, often in a context that links it to the deity (Sam 4:21–22; Jer. 2:11).

Glory is paradoxical, simultaneously revealing and concealing God. The appearance of the *kavod* varies; it manifests as a radiant nimbus (Ezek. 10:4), but could also reveals a *demut* (likeness or form): a throne, a **chariot**, and/or zoo- and anthropomorphic features (Ezek. 1:26–28). Sometimes it itself is surrounded by light, fire, and **cloud** (Ex. 24:17). The most intriguing expression of this biblical concept appears in an exchange before God and **Moses** in Exodus 33:14–21:

> Adonai replied, “My Presence (*panai*) will go with you, and I will give you rest.” Then Moses said, “Now show me your Glory (*kavod*).”And Adonai said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, Adonai, in your presence … But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.” Then Adonai said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my *kavod* passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.”

Another important passage is Isaiah 6:3, where **serafim** praise God during a visible manifestation in the **Temple**:

> And one [angel] would call to the other, “Holy, holy, holy! Adonai of Hosts! His glory fills all the earth!”

The Glory is manifest in the sanctuary or above the ark (Isa. 6:1–6). In fact, the ark becomes equated with the *kavod* (I Sam 4:21–22), an earthly homology to God’s celestial *kisei kavod*, “**Throne of Glory**” (Jer. 17:12). It is closely associated with YHVH’s chosen sanctuaries, the **Mishkan** (Ex. 29:46) and Heichal (1 Kings 8:11), where God would address Israel. It not only signifies the divine presence, but also possesses potency.

In time, glory becomes synonymous with God’s name (Isa. 43:7; 59:19). It also serves as a metonym of God’s omnipresence, “filling” the world (Num. 14:21; Isa 6:3). It is a barrier (Ex 24:18; 40:35). It scatters the enemies of Israel (Num. 10:34–35) and serves as a protective shield (Ps 3:3; Zech. 2:8–9). Its radiance transforms Moses’s face (Ex. 43:29–35). It is a persuasive force, the unfolding of God’s role in history (Isa. 60:1–3, 40:5, 58:8). Humanity is obligated to glorify or honor divine institutions, such as the **Sabbath** (Ex. 20:4). Disregarding the *kavod* or denigrating the divine will which it symbolizes is a grave transgression (Num. 14:21–23).

There are several different ways the term “Glory of God” is interpreted by later tradition. There is no overarching ideology of *kavod* offered by the Sages, though the **Talmud** offers a cluster of interpretations concerning its role in human-divine interactions (B. Kid. 30b–31a; Avot 4:1, 4:6). Other Jewish sources perpetuate and expand upon the biblical themes concerning divine glory: It is the visible representation of God’s attributes and/or actions (Ex. R. 23:15); beholding God’s glory is a privilege reserved for the righteous (Lev. R. 30), or vouchsafed to Israel as a people (MdRI 1.2); honoring others honors God (Kid. 32a) while conversely, God confers honor on those who honor their fellows (Avot 4:1). Inspired by the biblical words of the serafim praising God, some regard it to be a kind of divine emanation, perhaps synonymous with the **Shekhinah** and/or the **Holy Spirit**—the immanent, indwelling presence of God in **Creation**.[1] Some regard it to be qualitatively like an angel. Others associate it with the **Torah**.

Occasionally, the *kavod* is viewed as a hypostatic entity (Yoma 38a), a trend which will grow in medieval aggadah. God’s *kavod* overlaps semantically with another biblical concept, the *ruach Elohim* (“the spirit of God”), and a rabbinic one, the *Shekhinah* (“divine presence”). God’s glory adheres to other hypostatic and heirophanous entities, such as the Torah, Shabbat, the *alef-bet*, or Israel.

An important trend in the sources is to analogize divine and human *kavod* (Kid. 30b–32b). This ideology of divine-human correspondence especially centers on descriptions of the *kavod* as anthropomorphic, the *demut* or *tzurah*, appearing in biblical passages like Exodus 25:12, Isaiah 6:1–2, and Ezekiel 1:26–28 (*Midrash Proverbs* X; Sif. D. 355). The later Midrashim evidence a growing interest in the metaphysics of God’s *kavod*, paving the way for later mystical and philosophical speculation on the subject.

Sa’adia Gaon makes the earliest systematic statement about, as well as the most radical reinterpretation of, biblical passages concerning the *kavod*. Since the biblical descriptions of the glory include various forms while Sa’adia denies that revelation reveals anything about the nature of God, he concludes that the glory is not God in essence or even a divine attribute; rather it is *kavod nivra*, a created entity, akin to the angels (*Beliefs and Opinions* II:10–12; III:5). A great deal of subsequent medieval writing on the *kavod*; exegetical, rationalist, or esoteric, is in part reacting to Sa’adia’s argument, whether to affirm, refute, or modify it.

Many esoteric writings seize on Sa’adia’s idea and regard the Glory to be a **vision** of a divine form created by the invisible, formless God—a manifestation

of God that is actually visible to the human eye.[2] The adepts of the Circle of the Unique Cherub, for example, go so far as to claim that the human **Body** is actually made in the image of God's Glory, rather than in the image of the *agnostos theos.*

The boldest example of such speculation about the anthropomorphic glory is preserved in the cryptic text, Shi'ur Komah, ("The Measure of the [Divine] Stature"), which gives a detailed description of a cosmic-sized Anthropos, each of its limbs being composed of divine names. With less detail, the ecstatic mystics of the **Hechalot** literature also emphasize the visual nature of God's glory. The *kavod* is not merely the sensed presence, or the acts of God, but an observable manifestation of the divinity, anthropomorphic with a radiant body. Accordingly, the *kavod* as described in Ezekiel 1:26–28 occupies a prominent place in their literature. They extend its imagery to the entire heavenly **Pleroma**, encompassing the biblical semantic field of "kavod": the divine form, angels, the throne-chariot, and the celestial precincts. Using Isaiah 33:17 as its inspiration, **Hechalot** literature teaches that the worthy adept is able to gaze upon all this. Some medieval mystics recount visions of an anthropomorphic Glory.

God's glory also occupies an important place in the theosophy and contemplative practice of the 12th–13th-century *Chasidei Ashkenaz* (**German Pietist**). Reflecting their eclectic use in the **Bible**, the meaning they assign to *kavod* is multi-valiant. They built a metaphysical model around it being a two-tiered divine emanation (rather than creation) that permitted human interaction with divinity. In Pietist sources it is tied, through Ezekiel 1:26, Psalm 72:19, or 1 Chronicles 29:13, to the anthropomorphic visions of the prophets, theurgic power of the divine name, or identified with Torah (*Perush ha-Merkavah*, folio 59a; *Sefer ha-Shem*, folio 203a); *Sefer ha-Hasidim* repeatedly links divine glory with human dignity (48, 56). Regarding the experience of *kavod* as a reward for faith, Isaiah 33:17 and 60:1–3 are offered as proof the pious will be vouchsafed to blissfully bask in the glory (Ibid., 9, 10). In compositions such as the liturgical hymn *Shir ha-kavod*, the Pietists try to reconcile all this by envisioning a hierarchy of glories in order to accommodate all the biblical possibilities.

According to the Kabbalistic work *Sod ha-Egoz,* God uses nine different kinds of appearances—corresponding to the nine times God uses the phrase "Jacob my servant" in the Hebrew Scripture—while becoming visible/apprehensible to Jews. These different forms include **light**, **clouds**, **Angels**, and humanoid body parts, such as a hand (Lev. R. 1:14). This may be related to the concept of divine speculum, which is also nine-fold.

The *kavod* loses prominence of place in Spanish **Kabbalah** and later mystical schools, as it is subsumed within the new theosophic complex of divine emanations known as the *sefirot.*

Judah Halevi (d. 1141) garbs traditional notions of the glory in philosophic terminology, declaring the word *kavod* summarizes all the "spiritual forms" emanating from God's mind that can be apprehended by mortals (II:4; IV:3).

In his *Guide*, **Maimonides** (d. 1204) recognizes the unregulated, nontechnical use of the word in the Bible. Accordingly, he argues one may accept different understandings of the term without erring, though his personal opinion is that the *kavod* is whatever causes us to think about God; glory that in nature which attests to God's existence (*Guide* I:64; I:19).

The Glory is frequently referenced in the **Prayer** book. Biblical language concerning God's glory is explicitly incorporated into the Kedushah (Isa. 6:6) and in the Aleinu (Ps. 79:9) prayers, for example, while the Sabbath hymn *Shir ha-Kavod*, Song of Glory, artfully mingle mystical theosophy about the *kavod* with anthropomorphizing rhetoric about God that draws heavily upon **Song of Songs**, Chapter 5.

Perhaps the least understood of these is the appearance of an angel that *is* God. This is the Malach Adonai, a phenomenon that occurs several times in the Bible (Gen. 18, 22:15–16; Ex. 3:2) and is the basis for those angels mentioned in Talmudic and mystical tradition, such as Akatriel-YaH, which have names incorporating the **Tetragrammaton** and are, at times, identified as the "God of Israel" (Ber. 7b; *Ma'aseh Merkavah). SEE* CHERUB, THE UNIQUE.; DREAM; FACE OF GOD; MALACH ADONAI; METATRON; PROPHECY AND PROPHETS.

1. J. Levenson, "The Jerusalem Temple as a Devotional and Visionary Experience," in *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 1, Green, 32–41.

2. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 125–32.

Glory, Song of: (שיר הכבוד/*Shir ha-Kavod).* A mystical poem composed among the Rhineland **German Pietist** . This hymn has become a part of Jewish liturgy and preserves their beliefs in an alphabetic **acrostic**, also known by its opening words, *Anim Zemirot*:

I make pleasant songs, and weave verses/
Because for You my soul longs.
My soul desires to be in Your hand's shade/
To know all of Your deepest mystery.

[The word pair of *raz* and *sod*, synonyms for "mystery," is hard to translate.]

In the very first stanzas, common themes of mystical theology are in place—the lust for **secret** knowledge, and the desire for intimacy steeped in emotional, almost erotic terms. And the key to the mystical theology of the Pietists is the word *KaVoD* (**glory**):

When I speak of Your Glory/
My heart yearns for your love.
Therefore I will speak of Your Glories/
And Your Name I will glorify in songs of love.

To the author of *Shir ha-Kavod,* "Glory" is the visible manifestation of God. It's the part of God that is graspable by human experience, which is yet not God:

I will recount Your Glory, though I have not seen You/
I describe You though I have not known You.

There's another common mystical motif, that of **paradox**: recounting what has not been seen, describing what cannot be known. It is the Glory that makes the *agnostos theos*, the unknowable God, yet accessible and relatable, hidden and manifest simultaneously. The Glory is, according to the author, what the **Prophets** saw, what yields **Angels** and anthropomorphic images of deity.

Note also that in stanza four it reads "Glories," not "Glory." That's there because for the Chasidei Ashkenaz, there are two Glories, a masculine "upper" Glory and a feminine "lower" Glory. The upper *Kavod* is obscure, but the lower *Kavod* can be perceived. From where did this two-fold emanation get derived? From a biblical encounter between **Moses** and God "… you will see My back, but My face cannot be seen" (Ex. 33:23). Thus too the **Talmud** teaches one should pray with "eyes directed below and heart directed above" (Yev. 105b). Look at the lower *Kavod* while you imagine the unimaginable upper *Kavod*.

The masculine and feminine element comes from the Song of Songs, and *Shir ha-Kavod* uses the image of the male lover taken from there (chapter 5)—"His locks are curled and black"; "dazzling and ruddy is He"; "His head is like pure gold"—as a description of *Kavod*. That also leaves open the possibility—unstated in the poem and therefore underdeveloped, but present nonetheless—that the people **Israel** itself is the female counterpart, the lower *Kavod*:

He beautifies Himself through me, because He desires me/
And He shall be for me a crown of beauty.

The poem goes on using a letter of the *alef-bet* to start each stanza (some twice), subtly linking the *Kavod* to the word **mysticism** found in earlier mystical works

like Sefer Yetzirah.

The poem concludes with an envelope stanza that reuses the verb "to yearn":

May my contemplation be sweet to You/for my soul yearns for You.

The use of the **Hebrew** word root *Ayin-Resh-Bet* here also has mystical connotations. It means "sweet," invoking the sensuous aspect of the mystical experience. But the same root means "to mingle," (*sh'ti v'airev* means "warp and woof"). This both parallels the opening line ("and songs I weave …") with the image of interwoven thoughts and reflects the mystic's desire to merge with the divine.

The Song of Glory is recited at the end of Shabbat morning services in many traditional congregations, often sung by a young boy.

Gnostics and Gnosticism, Ancient: Ancient Gnosticism was a dualistic religious ideology with occult characteristics. Scholars identify two types. Mesopotamian Gnosticism (Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism) taught that two forces, good and **evil**, were eternal and in eternal conflict over control of **Creation**. The second type, Mediterranean Gnosticism, teaches that good and evil are the result of a cosmic disruption of a primordial harmony.[1] The latter form flourished around the Mediterranean basin in the Greco-Roman era. This second variety of Gnosticism may have grown out of Judaism, though too little is known to draw any conclusions. Whatever the case, Judaism and Gnosticism are linked together in the ancient world because many Gnostic traditions are dependent on the Hebrew Scriptures and their traditions, especially through Gnostic-flavored interpretations of Genesis and Ezekiel.

The fundamental belief shared by ancient Gnostic systems was that there are actually two divine powers: a good but remote deity who utterly transcends the material universe, and an evil creator god, most often called the Demiurge and usually equated with the God of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Demiurge creates material existence for his own ends, trapping spiritual entities and imprisoning them in bodies of flesh. Because of this, according to the ancient Gnostics, the world as we experience it is the result of a dreadful accident at best and an evil conspiracy at worst. Most humans do not understand the true nature of things because the Demiurge deludes them into accepting the world as beneficent. It is only through being initiated in the esoteric "gnosis" of the higher, immaterial god that a person can hope to be saved from the burden and torments of material existence.[2] Along with a disdain for the material world, ancient Gnosticism devalued the **Body** and particularly sexuality, which was the mechanism by

which new **Souls** are imprisoned in flesh by the Demiurge and his minions, the Archons. Thus Gnosticism exhibited a strong ascetic streak, often embracing celibacy and bodily mortification.[3]

On account of its dualism, its hostility for the Creator god, and its distain for physical creation, the Rabbis were vociferous in their opposition to the ancient Gnostics and their teachings. In fact, most references to heretics and heretical ideas found in Talmudic and Midrashic literature seem to be directed toward Gnosticism in its various forms (Chag. 14a–16a; Gen. R. 1:4; Sanh. 94a).

Gnosticism was gradually extinguished in the West by the hegemony of the Church, which viewed it as a Christian heresy, but it continued to flourish in the East for several centuries, mostly in the Manichean religion. The spread of Islam eventually undermined its viability in the Middle East and Central Asia. Gnostic ideas, however, continued to pop up throughout the Middle Ages in groups like the Bogomils and Cathars. Many modern scholars have recognized that there are Gnostic elements present in classic **Kabbalah**. The mystical system of **Isaac Luria**, with its emphasis on the notion that the world as we know it is a cosmic accident that needs correcting, comes the closest to a full-blown re-emergence of Gnosticism within Judaism.[4]

1. H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 112–46, 237.

2. Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis*, 50–145; K. Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987), 59–67.

3. M. Williams, "Divine Image—Prison of Flesh: Perceptions of the Body in Ancient Gnosticism," in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, M. Feher, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 1989). Also see Idel, "Sexual Metaphors and Praxis in Kabbalah," 212.

4. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 260; Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 144–46.

Goat: (עז; שעיר). The goat is symbolically linked to **Jacob**, who had three significant events in his life involving goats—his deception of his blind father **Isaac** in receiving his blessing (Gen. 27), his deception of his father-in-law **Laban** while in his service (Gen. 30), and his being deceived by his sons in the incident surrounding the selling of **Joseph** (Gen. 37). In what may be a continuation of this "deception" motif, a goat (known as the "scapegoat") is also offered "to Azazel" every **Yom Kippur** >as part of the atonement **ritual** for Israel (Lev. 16), a ceremony that parallels the Babylonian *Akitu* ritual. For all these reasons, the goat has become emblematic of sudden reversal and change of fortune. A goat kid is also the symbol of the **zodiac** sign Gedi.

The **Talmud** credits several extraordinary feats to the goats of righteous men, including the killing of bears and wolves. Goat's milk has multiple medicinal

uses, including the treatment of angina and ailments of the spleen (B.K. 80a; Tem. 15b). The **Midrash**, *Me'am Loez*, gives an elaborate explanation that the Yom Kippur scapegoat offering is a bribe given to the accusing angel **Satan**/**Samael**, in order that the angel will withhold his criticism before God (Achrei Mot/Kedoshim).

It was once popular to serve **goat**'s head at the Rosh Hashanah festive meal as a good luck charm of future prosperity. The practice is still observed by some Mizrachi families in Israel and the Middle East.

To medieval Christians, a horned **goat** was a symbol of **Satan**. Jews, regarded as allies of Satan, were stereotypically portrayed in Christian polemical illustrations as riding astride a billy goat, often sitting backwards.[1] *SEE* ANIMALS; SUBSTITUTION.

1. G. Jensen, *The Path of the Devil: Early Modern Witch Hunts* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 155.

Godhead: The ultimate state of God, often related the concepts of the incomparable, hidden, unknowable God, *deus absconditus* in Latin. According to **Maimonides**, the anthropomorphisms commonplace in the **Bible** are all figurative expressions that fail to reflect the real nature of God (*Guide*, Section 1). God has no **Body** and is essentially unknowable. Mystics, by contrast, make a distinction between the unknowable aspect of God, the **Ein Sof**, and that aspect of God that intersects with **Creation**. This knowable part of God can be graphed, as in the **sefirot**, or even envisioned as quasi-anthropomorphic forms (MdRI Shirata 4; R.H. 17b; PR 21).

Sefer ha-Bahir without hesitation adopts the **language** of the Bible and describes God as having seven "forms": right and left "legs," right and left "arms," a "torso," a "head," and an androgynous Zer Anpin (82). The Kabbalist Joseph uses more measured language:

> What is the meaning of words like "hand," "leg," "ear," etc. that we read in the Torah [that imply God has human form]? Know and believe that regarding these concepts, even as they testify to His greatness, no one can truly understand [the meaning] of these entities … and even though we are fashioned in the image and likeness of God, do not imagine that such an "eye" is in actuality the form of a divine eye … Know and understand there is no essential or structural similitude between God and we mortals. (*Sha'arei Orah* 2b)

SEE CHERUB, THE UNIQUE.; FACE OF GOD; MALACH ADONAI; PHALLUS; SEFIROT; SHI'UR KOMAH.

Gog and Magog: (גג ומגג). First mentioned in Ezekiel 38–39, Gog is the "Chief Prince" of Magog. He will be involved in the eschatological wars with **Israel** at the end of time. He will be defeated by God, the divine warrior and defender of Israel, and his corpse buried in the **Land of Israel**.

Across Jewish history, various national and tribal groups have been labeled "Magog" based on the ever-shifting geo-political trends and anxieties of the age. Mythically, in rabbinic writings, Gog and Magog are understood to be synonyms and are linked to the traumatic events around the coming of the **Messiah** (Sanh. 97a–b). Later sources identify the king of Gog as Armilus, a monstrous offspring of **Satan**. Eventually the two words become the archetypal term for a war of **evil** against God, and serve as the closest Jewish analogy to the Christian notion of Armageddon (A.Z. 3b; PdRK 79; Ed. 2:10; Shab. 118a; *S of S R.* 8:4).

Gold: (זהב/*Zahav,* also *Paz; Charutz; Ketem*). Because of gold's untarnishable surface, it is a symbol of eternity (II Enoch 8:4). It also has a number of occult associations. Gold is the most frequently mentioned metal in the **Bible**. According to **Talmud** Yoma 44b, there are seven kinds of gold listed in Scripture. Gold comes from *Havilah,* a mythical land bordering the **Garden of Eden** (Gen. 2:11). The instruments of the **Temple** sanctuary, itself a symbolic Eden, were made from or plated in gold. In sefirotic theosophy, gold is the color of Din, the attribute of justice.

Along with gentile practitioners, Jewish alchemists were very interested in obtaining the knowledge to transmute other substances into gold. Gold has many magical uses. It is a surprisingly common ingredient in medicinal potions. Various methods of **divination** using gold are known to Jews, such as using gold **coins** in making divination rods for hunting treasure, or the use of gold divination discs. For good measure, such discs can serve as **amulets** afterward (ShR; *Shimmush Tehillim,* Ps. 16). *SEE* COLOR; METAL.

Golden Calf: At precisely the moment that God was with **Moses** atop **Mount Sinai** giving the instruction that the Israelites were not to make **idols**, the people were sinning below by building a golden calf and calling it the "God of Israel." **Aaron**, the brother of Moses, played a crucial role in letting this offense happen (Ex. 34).

In their close reading of the biblical account, the Rabbis note that the **Bible** hints that the Israelite **women** refused to surrender their jewelry for the project. Because of this loyalty, God granted women an extra monthly day without work, at each **new moon** (Tosafot to R.H. 23a).

When Moses saw what had happened, he smashed the tablets of the Ten Commandments and the supernal letters on the stones immediately flew back to **heaven**. Some commentators claim Moses broke the tablets not out of anger, but for the sake of "plausible deniability"; if the people never actually saw the Commandments, they would be less culpable in God's eyes.

In some later mystical thought, the Calf became synonymous with the dangers of mystical speculation. According to this interpretation, the Israelites witnessed the same divine **chariot** described by Ezekiel, but misinterpreted the angelic "oxen" face to be that of God, thus inspiring them to build the calf (*Hechalot Rabbati* 259; *LOTJ* 3:400). *SEE* IDOL, IDOLATRY; TEN COMMANDMENTS.

Golem: (גולם). "Form/Humanoid." A man-made being, usually an anthropoid, animated through the creative power of the **Hebrew alphabet**. Belief that one could make artificial humans was widespread among magical practitioners of antiquity. Though there is a possible allusion to the idea in Scripture (Ps. 139:16), the specific basis for this is found in S**efer Yetzirah**, which teaches that man may become a "lesser creator" by learning to manipulate the occult power of the alphabet when combined with divine names (6, Long Recension). This is because God used words, the alphabet, and, especially, divine **names** in the work of making the cosmos (Gen. R. 4:2, 12:10; Bahir 59). The biblical proof text for this creative process comes from a passage from **psalms**:

> By the word "YHVH," the heavens were made. (Ps. 33:6)

Now that's not the conventional translation—your **Bible** probably translates it as "By the word of the Lord, the **heavens** were made." But the construct "of" is assumed, and the occult translation is equally valid. So if we know how to use the **Tetragrammaton** and other divine names of power, humans, too, could do as God does.

Some commentaries to *Sefer Yetzirah* claim biblical figures made golems. The commentators believe **Abraham** used *Sefer Yetzirah*'s power, noting the wording, "the people they made in Haran" (Gen. 12:5); the prophet **Jeremiah** also made a golem.

The idea was a theme in the **Talmud** (Sanh. 38a). Two anonymous Talmudic Sages were able to create a "one-third" size calf for Sabbath meals (Ber. 55a; Mid. Teh. 3). More cryptic is the report that Rava "created a man," who he then sent to Rabbi Zeira, who caused the creature to return to dust:

> Rava stated: If they wish, Tzadikim could create a world. Rava created a man and he sent it to Rabi Zeira. Rabi Zeira spoke with it and it did not respond.

> Rabi Zeira then stated, “You are created by my colleague, return to your dust.” Rav Chanina and Rav Oshiah would sit every Friday and study the *Sefer Yetzirah* and create a calf that has reached a third of its potential development and subsequently eat it. (Sanh. 65b)

By the Middle Ages, belief in the ability of mystical adepts to make a golem from a combination of dust and occult power was well established.[1] The medieval savant Solomon ibn Gabirol used his **wisdom** to create a maidservant for himself.

Since the animation came from using the **secret name of God**, the golem could then be returned to inanimate **Earth** by saying the divine name in reverse. Alternate traditions require not only the use of God’s name in the formation **ritual**, but also that the word *emet* (truth) be written on the forehead of the creature. Erasing the letter alef would leave only the word *met* (death), thereby slaying the golem (*Sefer ha-Gematriot*).

The golem became a staple of Jewish folk legends in Europe, the most famous golems being the one created Rabbi Elijah of Chelm and the one made by Rabbi Loew of Prague to protect the community against anti-Semitic violence. Though golem tales were published through the 13th century, the story of the Golem of Prague as known today is the largely creation of an early 20th-century rabbi and writer, Yudel Rosenberg, and his book, *Miflaot Maharal,* “The Wonders of Rabbi Judah Loew.”



The Golem of Prague *by Saul Aronsohn*

Like many other golem tales, over time the Prague golem grew in power and in unpredictable behavior and the creator was forced to destroy his creation, thus curbing his own hubris and teaching him humility. There is a story that the Vilna Gaon also attempted to make a golem.

There are several golem "recipes" on record. This is one outline of the creative golem recipes that do exist. Here's an example:

> Whoever studies *Sefer Yetzirah* has to purify himself, don white robes. It is forbidden to study alone, but only in two's and three's, as it is written … and the beings *they* made in Haran, (Gen. 12:5) and as it is written, two are better than one, (Eccl. 4:9) … It is required that he take virgin soil from a place in the mountain where none has plowed. Then he shall knead the soil with living water and shall make a body and begin to permutate the alef-bet of 221 gates, each limb separately, each limb with the corresponding letter mentioned in *Sefer Yetzirah*. And the alef-bets shall be permutated first, then afterward he shall permutate with the vowel—alef, bet, gimel, dalet—and always the letter of the divine name with them, and all the alef-bet. Afterward, [all the letters with each of the vowels, as with the alef:] ah, ah, ai, ee, oh, and then e'. Afterward, the permutation of [alef with a letter from the divine name plus

> the vowels], alef-yud, and similarly in its entirety. Afterward he shall appoint bet and likewise gimel and each limb with the letter designated to it. He shall do this when he is pure. These are the 221 gates. *(Sodei Razaya)*.[2]

Another method also requires a circle **dance** be performed around the inert form of the creature. This procedure is meant to mimic the Midrashic description of how God created **Adam** (Sanh. 38b; Gen. R. 24:2; PR 23:2; MhG 96; *Pseudo-Sa'adia*).

By most accounts, a golem has no free will or the power of **language**, though some stories have the golem utter words of warning from heaven. As a soulless entity, the golem is not required to fulfill the **commandments**. There are even theoretical discussions of the rights and obligations of golems under Jewish **law**.

1. M. Idel, *The Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990), 54–72.

2. Ibid., 108.

Goliath: Goliath of Gath was a biblical **giant** exceeding nine feet in height. He was probably killed by the youthful **David** using a sling. The word "probably" is necessary because the **Bible** itself gives contradictory testimony as to whether David actually did this feat (2 Sam. 21:19). Although ostensibly a Philistine, he is identified as one of the *Refaim*, a race of biblical **giants** who were the descendants of **fallen angel**.

According to the Sages, David and Goliath were related, for Goliath was the child of Orpah, the sister of Ruth, who was David's great-grandmother. Orpah bore three other giants besides Goliath. Goliath was born of a hundred fathers (*polysperma*):

> And there went out a champion [*benayim*] out of the camp of the Philistines etc … What means "benayim?" Rab said: That he was built up [*mebuneh*] without any blemish. Samuel said: He was the middle one [*benoni*] of his brothers. In the School of R. Shila they explained: He was made like a building [*binyan*]. R. Johanan said: He was the son of a hundred fathers and one mother [*ben nane*]. "Named Goliath of Gath" R. Joseph learnt: [This is] because all men pressed his mother like a wine-press [*gath*] (Sot. 42b; Tanh. Vayigash 8). David used occult powers to overcome him, striking him first with the evil eye. An angel then helped the diminutive David by smothering Goliath's face in the ground after the boy toppled him with the sling stone (Lev. R. 21.2). Goliath had a giant brother, Ishbi-benob, who was slain by one

of David's warriors. (Ruth R. 1:4, 14; *Midrash Shmuel* 20:106–108, 21:109; Tanh. Emor 4; Zohar III:272a)

Goral: (גורל). "Lots." *SEE* LOTS.

Goralot, Sefer ha-: "Book of Lots." A late medieval book of demonology and spirit **possession**.

Grapes: *SEE* FRUIT.

Grass: Every blade of grass has its own angel who compels it to grow (Mid. Konen 2:24). Mourners at a funeral throw grass over their shoulders as they leave the grave to signal to the spirit of the dead person that it is to remain with the **Body** for now. *SEE* ANGEL AND ANGELOLOGY; BURIAL.; DEATH; GHOST; MEMUNEH.

Graves: *SEE* BURIAL; CEMETERY.

Great Name, Book of: Modern title given to an anonymous text of **Hechalot** literature. It has sometimes been published as part of Hechalot Rabbati.

Green: *SEE* COLOR.

Grinder: (שחקים/*Shechakim*). Third of the **seven heavens**. From this level of **heaven** comes the **manna** and all other miraculous sustenance (Chag. 12b). It is the sefirot of Hod and **Netzach**, the source of divine potency (Bahir 74, 185). The emanation of divine righteousness is channeled through this precinct (Isa. 45:8; *Sha'ar Orah*, gate 3).

Guardian Angels: (מלאך שומר). These are **Angels** who oversee nations and individuals. According to the **Midrash**, the angels **Jacob** witnessed ascending and descending were the changing watches of guardian angels (Gen. 28:12). Every person has two such angels watching over him or her, one who assists when the person strives to do right, the other who clears the way if the person chooses to pursue **sin**:

> If a person makes himself to be a righteous person and speak the truth, he is given an Angel who guides him along the path of righteous people and truth is always spoken to him. If a person makes himself to be wicked, to corrupt and speaks lies, then an angel will be attached to him who will corrupt him/her and mislead them in life. If a person makes himself a "chasid," an

especially kind and thoughtful person, accepting everything painful, then a special angel is given to the person which can guide along the pathway of the exceedingly righteous, giving them strength to sustain any pain. (*Tanna Deve Eliyahu Zuta* 3:4)

The most famous of these are the two angels that escort each person on the **Sabbath**:

It was taught, R. Jose son of R. Judah said: Two ministering angels accompany man on the eve of the Sabbath from the synagogue to his home, one a good and one an woeful. And when he arrives home and finds the lamp burning, the table laid and the couch [bed] covered with a spread, the good angel exclaims, "May it be even thus on another Sabbath," and the woeful angel unwillingly responds "amen." But if not, the evil angel exclaims, "May it be even thus on another Sabbath," and the good angel unwillingly responds, "amen." (Shab. 119a)

But there are many varied traditions about the role of angels in the life of individuals (Tan. 11a; Chag. 16a; Shab. 119b; *Sefer ha-Gilgulim* 1). *SEE* NATIONS.



Two guardian angels by E. M. Lilien

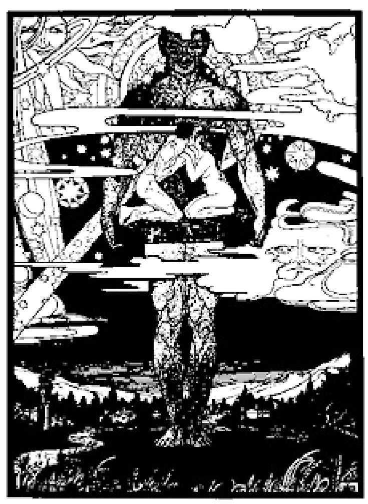
Guf ha-Briyot: (גוף הבריאות). "The Body/Vessel of Creatures." The source of human **Souls**. The word *Guf* is derived from **Hebrew** for "**Body**/corpse." The *Guf ha-Briyot* can also be referred to as the *Otzer* (Hebrew for "treasury"). In some traditions the Guf is located in the celestial plane of Aravot, other times it is located beneath God's **Throne of Glory**, which resides "above" Aravot. Though some cite Isaiah 57:16 as the source of the concept, **Isaiah** never uses the word, so the **Talmud** offers one of the earliest direct references to the Guf and teaches that the **Messiah** will not come until the Guf is emptied of all its souls (Yev. 62a–63b; A.Z. 5a). This is given a longer, if more enigmatic treatment in a work of early **Kabbalah**, Sefer ha-Bahir:

In its [?—there is no clear antecedent, perhaps the World to Come discussed earlier] hand is the treasury of souls. In the time when Israel is good, these souls are worthy of going forth and coming into this world. But if they are not

good, then [these souls] do not go forth. We therefore say, “The son of David will not come until all the souls in the Guf are completed.” What is the meaning of “all the souls in the Guf [Body]”? We say this refers to all the souls in the body of The Adam [Kadmon]. [When they are completed] new ones will be worthy of going forth. (Bahir 184)

The peculiar idiom of describing the treasury of souls as a “body,” as indicated, is connected to the mythic tradition of **Adam Kadmon**, the primordial human. Adam Kadmon, God’s “original intention” for humanity, was a supernal being, androgynous and macrocosmic. When this spiritual Adam sinned, his cosmic-sized soul burst asunder and humanity was demoted to flesh and **blood**, bifurcated and mortal creatures. Every human soul is therefore just a fragment (or fragments) cycling out of the great “world-soul” of Adam Kadmon. Hence, every human soul comes from that “guf,” the supernal body of Adam Kadmon. Part of the project of humanity it to effect the **Tikkun**, the restoration, of the soul of Adam Kadmon.

In keeping with other Jewish legends that envision souls as bird-like (derived from the biblical notion that the dead “chirp”—Isaiah 29:4), the Guf is sometimes described as a columbarium, a dove cote. This connects it to a related legend: the “Palace of the Bird’s Nest,” the dwelling place of the Messiah’s soul until his advent (Zohar II:8a–9a).



The Land of Illusion

The Guf: The Treasury of Souls by Moses Ephraim Lilien

The guf ha-briyot embodies the mystical notion of the whole universe being permeated with consciousness. It also reinforces the notion of the

interconnectedness, the brotherhood of humanity which is at the heart of the Genesis account. The legend of the Guf amplifies this essential spiritual as well as biological relatedness (Ned. 13b; Shab. 152a; PR 2:3; Bahir 126; Zohar I:119a).

Guf ha-Dak: (גוף הדק). "Sheer Body." This is the Kabbalistic concept, also called the tzelem, of a containing field that surrounds the **Soul** after it has separated from the physical **Body**; it is the physical body as it is manifest on spiritual planes. Different from an aura, this is the body the soul dwells in while it resides in **Eden**and/or **Gehenna** (Zohar I:7a, 224a–b; Zohar II:11a; *SGE*). It conforms to the contours of the physical human shape.

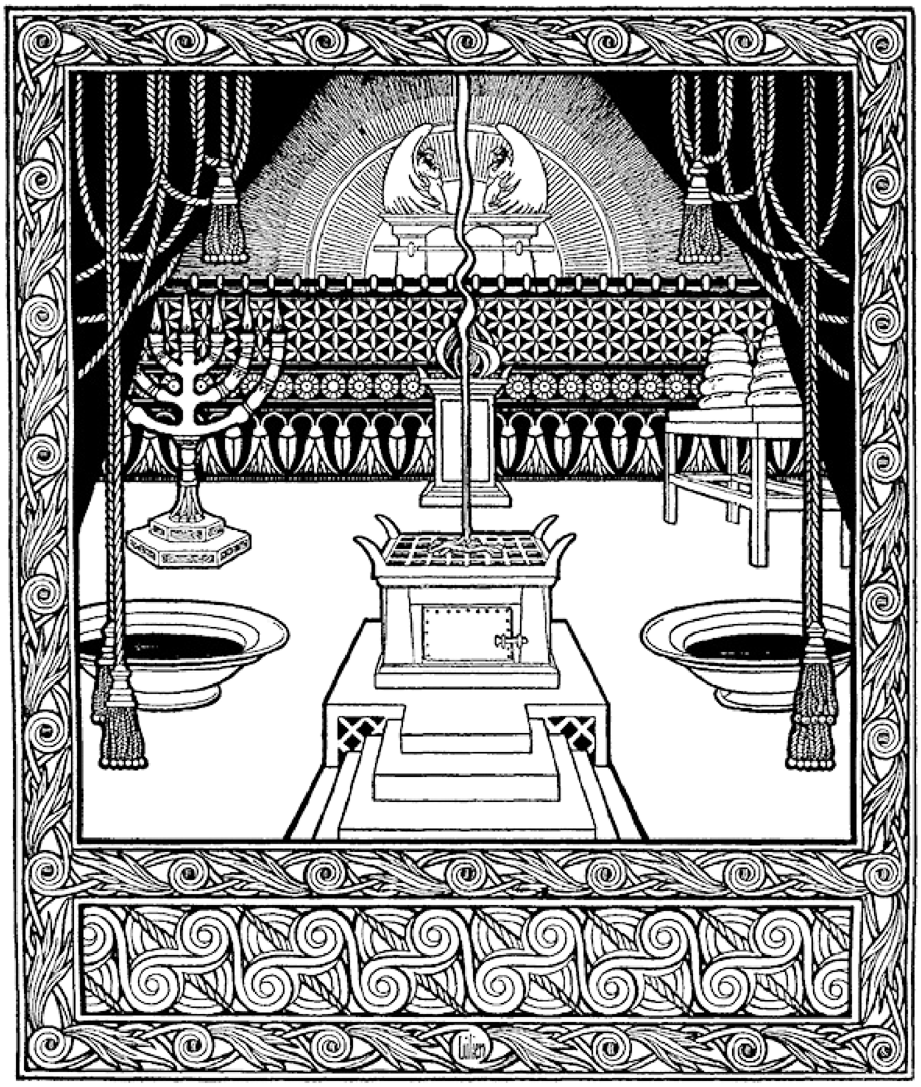
Gufei Torah: (גופי התורה). "Embodiments of Torah." At first used as an expression for "the essential teachings" of the **Torah**, in mystical parlance *gufei Torah* refers to the "external" or obvious aspects of the Torah—its laws, **commandments**, and plain meanings. This is in contrast to the "soul" of the Torah, which refers its esoteric interpretations:

> Come and see: There is a garment that is visible to all, and when those fools see someone in a garment that seems superior, they look no further. But the essence of the garment is the body; and the essence of the body is the soul. So it is with Torah. She has a body: the commandments of Torah, that are called "the body of Torah" [*gufei Torah*]. This body is clothed in garments, which are the stories of this world. Fools of the world only look at that garment, the story of Torah, and they know nothing more, and do not look at what is beneath that garment.
>
> Those who know more do not look at the garment, but rather at the body under that garment. The wise ones, servants of the King on high, those who stood at Mount Sinai, look only to the soul, the root of all, the real Torah. In the time to come, they are destined to look at the soul of the soul of Torah. (Zohar III:152a)

Guidance, the Book of: (Arabic, *Kativ Alahudah*). A magical handbook, written in a mix of **Hebrew**, Aramaic, and Arabic, found in the Cairo Geniza (T-S K 1.143). It contains many magical formulae, including spells for **love**, **divination**, influence, **healing**, **birth**, subduing **demons**, and **amulet** making.

[contents]

H



Note: The **Hebrew** letters **Chet** and Chaf are often transliterated into English as "H." Thus one frequently finds transliterated words like "Halom." This encyclopedia transliterates these letters as "Ch," resulting in spellings like "Chalom." Thus some words the reader is seeking in this chapter will appear under the heading "C."

Habakkuk: The biblical **Prophet** was the boy whom Elisha miraculously resurrected (Zohar I:7b). He was a master of esoteric knowledge (*Mid. Teh.* 7:17, 77:1; Bahir 46–47).

Habitation: (זבול/*Zebul*). Fifth of the **seven heavens**. In it exists the heavenly **Jerusalem** and **Temple**. **Michael** is both the angelic Prince and High **priest** of

this precinct (Chag. 12b).

Habraham (Abraham) the Jew: A 15th-century French alchemist and author of *Livre des Figures Hieroglifiques*, “The Book of Hieroglyphic Figures.” It is unclear whether Habraham was an observant Jew, a convert to **Christianity**, or simply a pseudonym for an anonymous alchemist who wished to give his writings greater gravitas by linking them with the Jewish occult. *SEE* ALCHEMY..

Hadraniel: (הדרניאל). “Acclaim of God.” An angelic guard who first challenged then guided **Moses** in his **ascent** into **heaven** (PR 20.3; Zohar II:258a). His voice carries across 200,000 **firmament**s. Lightning springs from his mouth (BhM I:59). He also appeared to **Adam** to caution him about revealing the **secrets** of a book of power, either Sefer Raziel or the lost book of Adam. (*Zohar* I:55b).

Hadumiah: (הדומיעה). A **seraf** that governs **Rakia** (ZCh Ruth 82:3).

Hafuch: (הפוך). “Turn [Around].” A word or phrase revealed by rearranging the letters of another word; an anagram. For example, *mishnah* (the oral traditions of the **Torah**) can be rearranged to spell *nishama* (**Soul**), teaching that learning the opral Torah is the key to eternal Life. Perhaps the earliest recognized anagram is in the name *Noach* (Noah), which not only means “comfort,” but when its **Hebrew** spelling is reversed (*chet-nun*), it means “grace.” Both themes are central to the **Noah** saga.

By Talmudic times, finding an anagram in a word was an accepted hermeneutic strategy for reading Scripture. It also became a feature in medieval poetry. Anagrams appear frequently in Kabbalistic thought and can also be referred to as temurah. Thus in Lurianic systems, the **names of God** are combined and recombined into meditative phrases. SEE ABBREVIATIONS; ENCRYPTION.; GEMATRIA.

Hagar: The handmaiden of **Sarah** (Gen. 16–22). She encountered an **Angel** after she was expelled out of Abraham’s encampment. According to the **Midrash**, she and Abraham were reunited at Sarah’s death, for the Rabbis identify her with the woman named K**eturah** mentioned in Genesis 22. Her change into a righteous woman triggered God to change her name (R.H. 16b; Zohar I:133b). *SEE* ABRAHAM.

Hai Gaon: 10th- to 11th-century leader of Babylonian Jewry. He is notable for providing us with corroborating reports on the existence of **Hechalot** mystics,

magical books such as the Sword of Moses, **amulets**, other esoteric practices he observed among his contemporaries in his rabbinic opinions on proper (and improper) Jewish observance (known as *Responsa*). He takes no position on the practices of those seeking mystical ascent but, in general, while he acknowledges the existence of magical beliefs among some Jews, he "finds no truth in the matter" and "the simpleton believes anything." [1]

1. Emanuel & Shoshanna, eds., *Newly Discovered Geonic Responsa* (Jerusalem-Cleveland: Ofeq Institute, 1995) [Hebrew], 131–33.

Hail: (ברד/*Barad*). Hail is emblematic of divine punishment. It emanates from storehouses in the heavenly abode of Depository. Different texts identify either Yurkami or Baradiel as the Prince of Hail. The hail which fell as a plague upon **Egypt** was a "**miracle** within a miracle," being ice of burning fire that neither water quenched nor heat evaporated. In **Gehenna**, it hails continuously half the year (Ex. R. 51:7). *SEE* RAIN; SEVEN HEAVENS.

Hair: (שער/*Se'ar*). Hair is a symbol and source of power in Jewish tradition. Based on the image of the lover in **Song of Songs** (chapter 5), which is interpreted as an allegorical description of God, God is often referred to as having "hair" or "locks." The **dew** of **resurrection** clings to God's hair; one day God will shake it off, reviving all the dead (PdRE 34; Shab. 88b).

The description found in Daniel of God as Atika Yomim, the Ancient Holy One, also elevates the symbolic importance of beards. God has thirteen "curls" in His divine beard, representing the thirteen merciful attributes (Zohar III:131a). These curls are the conduits by which those qualities flow into **Creation** (*Likkutai Torah*). Some sources identify the Zer Anpin first described in the **Zohar** as "God's beard." Moses Cordovero spoke of the "mystery of the beard."

For mortals, hair symbolizes identity, compassion, and vanity. In the case of men, it conveys virility and strength. The **Bible** forbids Israelite men to "round" the corners of their hair (Lev. 19). Most interpret this to mean men should remain bearded, though others see it as requiring lengths of uncut hair, known as *payot*.

Nazirites, biblical devotees who desired a higher level of commitment to God, could not cut their hair at all (Num. 6:1–21). **Samuel** and Samson are two examples of biblical Nazirites. In the Samson narrative, of course, his hair was the reservoir of his supernatural strength (Judg. 16). In Jewish folk custom, the hair of a male child is not cut for the first three years of life, evidently with the idea that it gives the vulnerable child an added measure of protection, and is then

only cut for the first time in a **ritual**, preferably at a place of power, like the tomb of a saintly person. Many Chasids consider the side curls and beard to be so important that they are ready to be martyred rather than allow theirs to be cut.

A woman's hair is also a source of potency, but in a different way. It is seen as the most visible sign of her sexual power, and therefore must be concealed from all but her husband after **marriage** (Ket. 2:1; Ber. 24a). Thus the image of **women** with unbound hair becomes a stereotype for wantonness and danger. In medieval tradition, **vampires** have the power to fly once they release their hair.

The **Zohar** uses hair in the practice of physiognomy and regards hair to be a reflection on personal disposition and character (Zohar II:77b). Borrowing from Greco-Roman practice, hair could be used as an ingredient of magico-medical formulae (Git. 69a; Shab. 110a). The most fearsome example of such use would be a **curse**, or binding ritual, which would require a lock of the victim's hair.[1] Therefore, the proper disposal of hair is critically important. *SEE* BEARD OF FAITH.

1. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 119, 197.

Ha'itmari, Elijah: Rabbi and exorcist (Turkish, ca. 18th century). This rabbi-spiritualist interviewed a poltergeist who revealed many **secrets** of the spirit world to him (*Midrash Talpiyot*).

Ham: One of the sons of **Noah**. According to Midrash Tanchuma, Noah did not curse **Ham**, but his son Canaan. That Ham, Shem, and Japheth have another brother is based on Genesis 9:19–25, where Noah begins his curse poem, "Cursed be Canaan …" Other sources conclude Ham either castrated or sodomized Noah to merit the curse of his son (Sanh. 70a; Gen. R. 36). The subjugation of the Gibeonites, descendants of Ham, in Joshua 9:23 fulfill the curse. In the **Zohar**, Ham is the personification of the sefirah Gevurah in the generation of **the Flood** and Canaan the demonic energy that is spawned from the left side of the sefirotic **tree** (I: 73a). *SEE* SEX.

Haman: Advisor to the Persian king Ahasuerus and villain of the Book of **Esther**. As a descendant of the Amalekite King Agag, he was possessed by a metaphysically rooted hatred of Jews, leading him to seek the extermination of the Jews of Persia. According to the **Midrash**, he was an astrologer who selected Adar as the month for the massacre because no Jewish holiday fell in that month to grant the Jews protective good fortune. **Angels**nevertheless helped trip him up in the disastrous (for him) wine party with Queen Esther (Meg. 16a). When his plan failed, he was sentenced by King Ahasuerus to hang, but of all the **trees** in

the world, only the reviled thorn tree would allow him to be hung from its branches (Es. R. 9). *SEE* ASTROLOGY; LOTS.

Hamnuna Sava, Rav: In **Talmud**, he is merely another of the Sages. According to the **Zohar**, on the other hand, he is a heavenly being who descends to **Earth** disguised as a humble ass-driver and reveals **secrets** of the **Torah** to righteous initiates prepared to hear his **wisdom**. He is evidently the offspring of a monstrous sea creature, perhaps **Leviathan** (I:5a–7a). He dwelt in **heaven** until sent to earth, where he is fated to walk until the coming of the **Messiah**, when he will serve as the Messiah's footman. He is the author of a lost book, *Sefer Hamnuna Sava*, which is cited several times in the Zohar (II:146a–b). *SEE* SAR HA-TORAH.

Hamsa or Chamsa: (חמסה, חמשה). "Five." A **hand**-shaped **amulet**. *SEE* HAND.

Hamshakhah: (המשכה). "Drawing Down." *Hamshakhah* is tapping into the divine effluence. In the writings of David ben Judah Leon, this is the term he uses for prophetic **ecstasy** (*Magen David*). The writings of Ezra of Gerona, it is the experience of "feeding" from the **Shekhinah** (*Perush Shir ha-Shirim,* comment to 1.7). In later **Kabbalah** and Hasidism, it becomes synonymous with various aspects of the mystical experience. Most often it is the efflux of the **sefirot** for theurgic purposes through the performance of a Jewish **ritual**, especially through the act of reciting a statutory **blessings** over a person or phenomenon (*Ginnat Egoz; Pardes Rimmonim*). Unleashing this theurgic power in a Jewish rite is usually a matter of **kavanah**, of bringing the right state of mind to the ritual.[1] *SEE* THEURGY.

1. Idel, *Hasidism*, 71–72.

Hand: (יד). The hand is a symbol of strength and action. The **Bible** speaks of both the hand and fingers of God, though most readers understand that to be figurative **language**. Still, the hand is a symbol of godly potential. God's right hand is the manifestation of divine power (Deut. 33:2; Pss. 118, 139). When God's hand is extended in **love**, it is the source of deliverance, protections, and revelation (Ex. 6:6, 33:22). Once the Egyptians had experienced the ten **plagues**, **Pharaoh's** counselors declared it the "finger of God." The Sages take this to mean that when God's entire "hand" is raised against the wicked, fifty plagues are unleashed against them.

Even the number of fingers and joints in the hand conceal **secrets** of the divine nature (Isa. 51:16; Zohar I:5a). Hands draw down divine energy (Zohar

III:195b). They can also be the wellspring of impurity (i.e., masturbation) (Zohar I:129a). According to Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, **Adam** and **Eve** were initially protected by a skin made of nail, which disappeared when the first couple sinned, leaving them naked (14).

Ritual immersion of the hands before **eating** is a fixed rabbinic practice, but in the Zohar it takes on metaphysical consequences: those who fail to wash allow the **evil eye** or unclean spirits an opening, while washing elevates one to the status of an **Angel**, with all the protection that entails.

Many Jewish communities arrange the fingers of a corpse awaiting **burial** to resemble **Hebrew** letters that appear in the **names of God**.

Magical uses of the fingers and hand include both rituals and signs to be used against the evil eye. For example, squeezing the thumb with the opposing hand is a prophylactic act (Ber. 55b). While chiromancy is described in the **Dead Sea Scrolls** and the **Zohar**, palm reading such as is familiar to us today is a form of **divination** mostly derived from non-Jewish sources, but is given credence in some later writings (*Nishmat Chayyim* 3, *Ma'aseh Book*).

The **chamsa**, a representation of an open hand, is one of the most ancient of Jewish **amulets**. It is sometimes called the "hand of **Miriam**" (among Jews) or the "hand of Fatima" (among Muslims). These amulets often incorporate other protective devices, such as verses of Scripture in microscript and/or **eyes** embedded in the palm. *SEE* FINGER.

Hanhagot: (הנהגות). "[Spiritual] Practices." Special spiritual and devotional practices, above and beyond the usual requirements of Jewish tradition, which are taken on by an individual for the purposes of cultivating a higher consciousness.

Hanhagot Tzadikim: This anthology contains the collected hanhagot of the spiritual giants of **Chasidism**.

Harba de Moshe: *SEE* SWORD OF MOSES.

Harp of David: David is known as "the sweet singer of Israel" and there are several legends concerning his harp or lyre. With it, he temporarily exorcised Saul's evil spirit (1 Sam. 16; Pes. 119a). It would play by itself each midnight, rousing David to pray and compose (PdRE 21). The strings of the harp were reputed to be made from the sinews of the ram that **Abraham** sacrificed on Mount Moriah (Ber. 3b). As a sign of eschatological hope, it is taught that this harp, symbolizing God's promises to Abraham, will be played by David, progenitor of

the **Messiah**, at the **resurrection** to awaken the dead. A seven-string harp is a symbol of the unredeemed world; eight of the time of the Messiah; the ten-string harp is the instrument of the **World to Come** (EY 13b). The ten strings are harmoniously attuned ten **sefirot** (T.Z. 12) *SEE* DAVID; MUSIC.

Hashbaah: (השבעה). "Swearing/Adjuration." A magical adjuration, usually for summoning angels, mostly for protection, often recited at Havdalah, when the week is beginning.[1] *SEE* INCANTATIONS, SPELLS, AND ADJURATIONS; LECHISHAH; SEGULAH Or Segulot.

1. Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in Classical Kabbalah*, 11.

Hate Spell: A particular type of curse that creates enmity between two people targeted by the adept. Evidently these curses were used to undermine rivals, particularly rivals for love. If one could create hostility between a rival and the person the practitioner desired, this would be advantageous. One can think of it as a kind of aversion-conditioning love spell. The few examples found in **Hebrew** magical texts (ShR; Cairo Geniza fragments) are by and large identical to such spells appearing in Greco-Roman magical spell books, so the technique may well have been borrowed.[1] *SEE* CAIRO GENIZA; CURSE; INCANTATION; LOVE.

1. S. Ortal-Paz, "An Incantation Bowl for Sowing Discord," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 58 (2013): 241–256.

Havdalah: (הבדלה). "Separation." A ceremony performed to mark the end of the **Sabbath** at sunset on Saturday. It involves a cup of wine, inhaling aromatic spices, and a **candle** that is extinguished in the wine to mark the end of the holiday. The origins of the **ritual** are said to go back to **Adam** who, experiencing terror at the first sunset, received from God the gift of **fire**, over which Adam uttered the first **blessings**. The **Messiah** will first appear at Havdalah.

As the end of Shabbat and the beginning of the week, Havdalah is a time of transition, an ideal time to utter supplications and **incantations** for protection, **healing**, **love**, and good fortune:

> This is the Havdalah of Rabbi Akiba against all witchcrafts and against injury from an evil spirit, or for [one] who his woman is forbidden to him, or to open a heart … And after he has received the cup, he will speak beginning from "A song of David: Ascribe to the Eternal, O divine beings …" the entire psalm, until "may He bless His people with peace" (Ps. 29). [Then he will recite] "Untie the fetters of wickedness, loosen the binders of tyranny, and

> send away liberty crushers and all oppression be cut off.” [angel names recited …] (*Havdalah de-Rabbi Akiva* 1)

Closely connected to the theme of love, young **women** who gaze at the light of the Havdalah candle reflected in their wetted fingernails can see the face of their future husband. Touching those same hands to the eyelids brings good luck.[1] Allowing the candle to burn down entirely before extinguishing ensures a good spouse for a daughter. Wine used in Havdalah can heal ocular ailments (Mid. Teh. Ps. 32). Sprinkling the wine on the table ensures a week of bounty. It can also have detrimental effects if abused. *SEE* RITUAL.

1. Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in Classical Kabbalah*, 257–63. Also see E. Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices: Mystical, Magical, and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2000).

Havdalah de-Rabbi Akiva: A guide to a theurgic **ritual** to be used during the Havdalah ceremony, it contains elaborate add-ons to the halachically mandated Havdalah ritual, including angel-invoking anti-demonic adjurations similar to those found on **incantation bowls**:

> By means of the angels of Adonai is a bright leopard burst. I adjure and I surely bind and I surely cut off, I surely forswear against a[ny] spirit or demon or shade or spells or bindings or charms, evil acts or an evil eye, or any bad women, or any evil word, or any evil creation (woe) that is in the world; you will clear away and cancel from the 248 limbs of Peloni bar Peloni, from this day and beyond in the name of Adiriron, Adonai Tzevaot, Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh, amen, amen, amen, selah!

The **language** often parallels the rhetoric of magical manuals. Most Jews who possess this book keep it as a **segulah**, an **amulet**. Rather than read from it or perform the rituals, the book itself is thought to have a talismanic function.

Hay: (ה). The fifth letter in the **Hebrew alphabet**. It has the numeric value of five. It is one of the three letters that form the **Tetragrammaton**. According to **Kabbalah**, God created the **Earth** with the letter *hay*. When God changed Abram’s name to **Abraham** by adding a *hay*, it signified that the world was created for the sake of Abraham coming into it (Zohar). Similar name changes occur for **Sarah** and Joshua.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 85–93.

Head: *SEE* FACE; FACE OF GOD; PHYSIOGNOMY.

Healing: (רפואה/*Refuah*). "Whatever is effective as a remedy is not **witchcraft**" (Shab. 67a). Preventing and curing illness and **disease** is a universal human preoccupation. Jews have been tremendously influential in the history of Western medicine and their reputation as formidable healers reaches back into Classical Antiquity.

In the **Bible**, God is the most often identified source for disease and healing (Ex. 15:26), and the most common cause for God sending disease is **sin** (Deut. 28:27). God flatly declares, "I wound and I heal" (Deut. 32:40). It would have been logical, therefore, to conclude that human medicine and healing are actually contravening the divine will.

Jewish tradition does not accept this line of argument, however (Shab. 82b), and instead argues that the human attempts at healing are analogous to the human cultivation of the **Earth**: a necessary activity if human life is to thrive (Midrash Samuel 4). The appropriateness of healing **incantations** is also debated, one side arguing that a variety of healing practices are *de facto* **magic** prohibited by the **Torah**, while others permit any efficacious healing remedy or device. Its effectiveness is its own divine endorsement (Hor. 13b; Shab. 67a–67b; Tos. Shab. 7:21; J. Shab. 6:9). Based on its profound subject matter and life-sustaining intent, sound medical advice is, *ipso facto*, to be considered Torah:

> R. Huna said to his son Rabbah, "Why are you not to be found before R. Hisda, whose dicta are [so] keen?" "What should I go to him for," answered him, "seeing that when I go to him he treats me to secular discourses! [Thus] he tells me, when one enters a privy, he must not sit down abruptly, nor force himself overmuch, because the rectum rests on three teeth-like glands, [and] these teeth-like glands of the rectum, might become dislocated and he [his health] is endangered." "He treats of health matters," he exclaimed, "and you call them secular discourses! All the more reason for going to him."(Shab. 82a)

Just as Jews believed that illness can have supernatural origins, it can likewise be treated via magical, theurgic, and other supernatural means. In practice, all this has meant that **amulets**, spells, exorcisms, and potions were a regular part of the healer's arsenal of treatments.

In the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, evil spirits are regarded as the source of many illnesses; an idea that finds parallels in the Gospel accounts of **Jesus**'s healing ministries. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, there exists a fragmentary text (4Q560)

that is a collection of protective formulae for fending off demonic attack. Specifically, it deals with protection against fevers, tuberculosis, chest pain, and the dangers of **childbirth**. Other texts (4Q510–11; 11Q11) deal with the binding of disease-causing **demons**.

In rabbinic writings the word for epilepsy, *nikhpeh*, means to be "possessed." Exorcizing spells are therefore included along with other treatments. The **Talmud** regards **demons** as the cause of ocular diseases, food poisoning, and other ailments (Pes. 111b–112a). Witchcraft, spiritual attack by another human being, was also an accepted explanation for disease. In the Talmud an opinion is recorded that "ninety-nine out of a hundred die from an **evil eye**" (B.M. 107b).

Aside from a wide array of petitionary and intercessory **Prayers**, Jewish literature preserves a vast list of theurgic and magical methods of healing illnesses, whether or not such illnesses are ascribed to attack by evil spirits. Along with conventional folk remedies involving diet, curative **food**s (Git. 67b, 69a–70a; Eruv. 29b; A.Z. 28a–b; Ket. 50a; Yoma 83b–84a), exercise and healthful practices, the Sages would prescribe the recitation of Scriptural verses (Deut. 6:4 [the Sh'ma], or Ps. 29, for example) and incantations, called *refuot* (healings). Talmud Shabbat 66b–67a and Gittin 67a–69a record examples of such healing incantations.

The very act of studying Torah serves as a treatment for illness, according to Rabbi Joshua ben Levi (Eruv. 54a). Rabbi Judah declares sacred **study** "a drug for the entire body."

Angels, or in a few cases demons, could be invoked to effect a recovery (Shab. 67b; Sanh. 101a). Tractate Shabbat lists the names of the healing angels not included in other sources: Bazbaziah, Masmasiah, Kaskasiah, Sharlai, and Armarlai. Demons, presumably the sources of a given affliction, could be summoned in order that they might be adjured, bound, and/or exorcised.

amulets and talismans were frequently used both as preventatives and as remedies (Shab. 67a), though again, some Sages strongly disapproved of such devices. Tractate Shabbat discusses whether one may go in public on the **Sabbath** with healing charms (one is permitted only to carry a limited number of things on the day of rest), including locust eggs (for an earache), fox tooth (for **sleep** disorders), or a nail from a gallows (for an inflammation).

Items imbued with kedushah, spiritual power, such as leftover wine from holiday Kiddush, or olive oil blessed for use in a Chanukah **menorah**, were also felt to have extra medicinal power. This also raises the point that particular foods and herbs were often suggested to counteract illnesses. In rare instances, this

even included non-kosher meats. Mishnah Yoma 8 sets the precedent that non-kosher food may be consumed if it has a medicinal purpose. Examples are given in the commentary to that Mishnah (Yoma 84a) of treatments that include donkey flesh (for jaundice) or dog liver (for rabies).

In the Talmudic age, remedies were mostly based on the principle of *similia similibus curantur*, using natural materials and treatments that seemed to have some analogous/symbolic association with an illness. An example of this homeopathic approach would be using parts of a bush—think of "burning" bush—to obtain a cure for a fever (Ket. 50a; Git. 69a; Shab. 67a).

This use of material chosen for its "logical" suitability as a treatment dominates in both early Jewish medicinal and magical texts. Occasionally, rabbinic literature will describe a medicinal recipe containing noxious ingredients, such as animal excrement, **Earth** from a grave, or gall. Poultices, curative broths, and topical mixtures, again frequently crafted from the most unlikely materials, were also common (Git. 68b–69a).

Cupping and bloodletting, well-established traditional treatments of antiquity, continued to enjoy favor, even though the **Talmud** itself expresses serious doubts about the efficacy of the former.

Faith healing—the belief that certain people had the power to heal residing in their touch—also appears in a famous passage in tractate Berachot. Two Rabbis in particular, Chiyya and Yochanan, were famous for having this healing power (Ber. 5b).

The **synagogue** of antiquity was not only a place of sacred assembly, but also a center for healing. Some early Church Fathers railed bitterly because their congregants were entering Jewish places of worship in search of treatment for their ailments. These complaints were often accompanied by accusations of Jewish **sorcery**, which suggests that various forms of spiritual and/or magical healing were common practice.[1]

By the medieval period, Jewish medicine was increasingly based on naturalistic premises, which is to say that Jews were educated in the Galenic principles of the "four humors" as etiological theory and as a diagnostic tool. Treatments that were more empirically grounded, as opposed to magical and homeopathic, were becoming a larger part of medical practice. In fact, Jews became famous and sought-after as practitioners of scholarly Greek-style healing. Still, whether provided by folk healers or scholastic healers, most medicine continued to be based on a hodgepodge of natural and supernatural assumptions and a mélange of natural and magical treatment regimes.[2]

Jews were enthusiastic in applying the Arab elaborations on the Greek methods of medicine during the Middle Ages and began making their own unique contributions using the new methods. Outstanding Jewish physicians, like the philosopher **Maimonides**, championed naturalistic theories of disease etiology and treatment over more fantastic traditional assumptions.

Jews embraced the subsequent scientific revolutions in medicine and as a result, traditional folk healing has been pushed to the periphery of Jewish life in recent centuries. Now it is mostly the domain of communities that resist the influences of modernity, such as the Chasids, or among Oriental Jewish communities that are still only a generation or two away from more traditional folkways. Interest in non-Western healing methods, however, is on the rise, and many Jews are re-incorporating traditional Jewish healing practices of **Prayer**, healing touch, and herbal medicine into their treatment. *SEE* PHARMACOPOEIA. ; SEGULAH Or Segulot.

1. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 274.
2. Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science*, 26–34. Also see Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors*.

Heart: (לב/*Lev*). In Hebrew thought, the heart is the seat of intelligence rather than emotion. It also symbolizes harmony and the center. The **Holy of Holies** was called the *lev ha-olam*, the “heart of the world.” Israel is described as the “heart” of humanity, while the other peoples are the limbs (*Kuzari*). Judah ha-Levi also compares the two sides of the heart to the tablets of the **Ten Commandments** (Jer. 17:1; Diwan 2:272), where God’s name is inscribed (Ex. 23:21; Diwan 3:88). Esoteric or paranormal teachings about the heart focus on it as an organ for visionary and prophetic experiences, and usually take verse 5:2 from **Song of Songs** as the textual departure point. Divine manifestations are perceived through the “awakening of the heart” or the “heart’s eye” (*Guide* I:4):

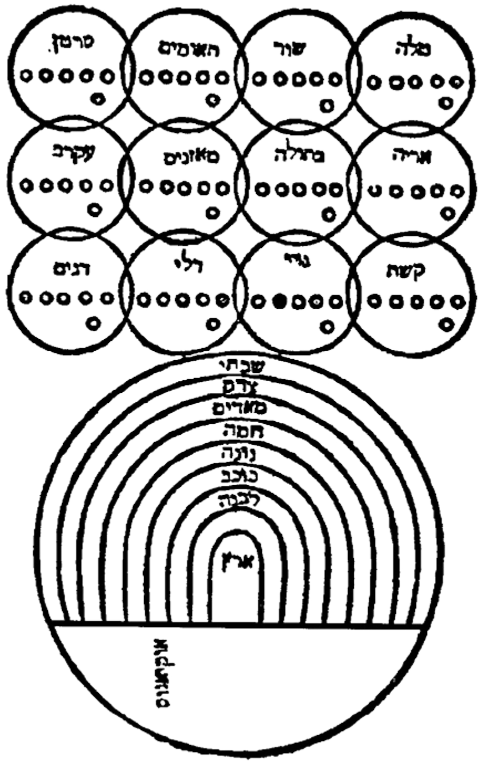
> My heart has seen You and believes in You as if I had stood at Sinai;
> I have sought You in my visions,
> Your glory passed over me,
> descending upon the clouds. (Diwan 3:65; also see *Kuzari* II:24)[1]

In *Sefer Yetzirah*, the sefirot are contemplated via the heart (1.8). The critical theurgic act of unifying the sefirot occurs in the heart (*Perush Shir ha-Shirim*). The Zoharic idea that Tiferet is the “heart” of the **sefirot**.

1. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 74.

Heaven: (שמים/*Shamayim*). The abode of God and God’s celestial court. Sometimes, but not always, it is thought also to be the place of Gan Eden, the afterlife abode of the righteous dead. By the Greco-Roman period, it is regarded to be the highest plane in a triune cosmic structure: the heavens, the **Earth**, and the underworld.

The notion that the heavens themselves are segmented into a hierarchy of seven compartments is a common belief in classical and late antiquity.



A diagram of the heavens from Sefer Raziel

It may have its roots in the seven obvious heavenly structures: the **moon**, the **sun**, the **planets** visible to the naked eye, and the stars, though Jewish descriptions of the seven layers do not generally conform to this purely astronomical scheme of the heavens. Thus in Jewish writings, the planets and stars are generally confined to a single level. Rather, Jewish traditions of the heavenly hierarchy are based on either angelology—segmenting the heavens according the class of angel that inhabits it—or parsing it according to the many unseen heavenly functions and phenomena, like the sources of precipitation, the abodes of the dead, and the celestial residences.[1]

The idea of heaven being divided into seven precincts first figures in the Apocrypha and in the sectarian writings of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, especially in

the work Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. The names of the seven heavens that are given in **Talmud** are Vilon, **Rakia**, Shechakim, **Zebul**, Maon, Machon, and Aravot (Chag. 12b; AdRN 37). Each level is separated from the other by a distance of five hundred years (*Gedulat Moshe*).

Re'uyot Yehezkel, an early work of some relationship to the **Hechalot** literature, offers its own list: *Shamayim*, *Shemei Shamayim*, *Zebul*, *Arafel*, *Shechakim*, *Aravot*, and *Kisei ha-Kavod*. Yet another list gives the following seven with one add-on: *Rakia*, *Shemei ha-Shamayim*, *Zebul*, *Arafel*, *Shechakim*, *Ma-chon*, *Aravot*, and *Kisei ha-Kavod*. According to this text, the eighth heaven is where God abides while not sitting on the **Throne of Glory** in the seventh palace/heaven. In one aggadah, there are actually seven **chariot**/thrones, one in each level.

In the Zohar, the seven heavens are equated with the lower seven **sefirot** (Zohar I:32b, 86a). *SEE* PALACE.

1. Elior, *The Three Temples*, 77–78.

Heavenly Academy: *SEE* YESHIVA SHEL MALAH.

Hebrew and Hebrew Alphabet: (עברית). Called the *Lashon Kodesh*, "the Holy Tongue," Hebrew is considered a supernal language, the language of **heaven**. One Sage goes so far as to say that angels do not recognize **Prayers** said in other tongues (Shab. 12b). Hebrew is the language of theurgic power par excellence. The first key to the power of the language, Jewish mystics teach, lies in the Hebrew alphabet:

> [T]he letters of the Torah are vessels and chambers of God, and by means of the kavanah, man draws down within them the emanation of the supernal light. (*Or ha-Ganuz*) [1]

The Hebrew alphabet consists of twenty-two letters, all of them consonants (an additional system of vowel symbols was adopted in the Middle Ages).

Letter	Name		Sound	Value	Designation	Phonetic Family
א	Alef	אלף	silent	1	mother	guttural
ב	Bet	בית	B, Bh	2	double	labial
ג	Gimel	גמל	G, Gh	3	double	palatal
ד	Dalet	דלת	D, Dh	4	double	lingual
ה	Hay	הא	H	5	elemental	guttural
ו	Vav	וו	V (W)	6	elemental	labial
ז	Zayin	זין	Z	7	elemental	dental
ח	Chet	חית	German ch	8	elemental	guttural
ט	Tet	טית	T	9	elemental	lingual
י	Yod or Yud	יוד	Y (I)	10	elemental	palatal
כ,ך	Kaf	כף	K, Kh	20	double	palatal
ל	Lamed	למד	L	30	elemental	lingual
מ,ם	Mem	מם	M	40	mother	labial
נ,ן	Nun	נון	N	50	elemental	lingual
ס	Samech	סמך	S	60	elemental	dental
ע	Ayin	עין	silent	70	elemental	guttural
פ,ף	Payh	פא	P, Ph	80	double	labial
צ,ץ	Tzadi	צדי	Tz	90	elemental	dental
ק	Kuf	קוף	K (Q)	100	elemental	palatal
ר	Resh	ריש	R, Rh	200	double	dental
ש	Shin	שין	Sh (S)	300	mother	dental
ת	Tav	תו	T, Th	400	double	lingual

The Hebrew alphabet

The Hebrew letters have always been accorded special power because God brought the universe into existence through a speech-act (Gen. 1; Ps. 33:6). In the **Bible**, adding or changing even a letter to a person's name had the power to change their destiny (Gen. 17:5, 35:15).

In the **Midrash**, language, the world, and scripture form an overlapping semantic and existential field:

> Just as Torah was created by means of the holy language, so too, the world was created by the holy language. (Gen. R. 18.4)

According to the **Talmud**, **Bezalel** was selected to build the **tabernacle**, which was a **microcosm** of the universe (Num. R. 12:13), precisely because he also knew how to manipulate the alphabet (Ber. 55a; Tanh. Bereshit 5). Many other passages find supernal meaning in the alphabet and even in the shape of its letters (Gen. R. 1:10; Tanh. Bereshit 11). One legend, in which the letters of the **Ten Commandments** reportedly fly back to heaven when **Moses** destroys the tablet, illustrates the divine nature of these characters (Pes. 87b).

Sefer Yetzirah further explores the ideas about the supernal nature of language that are found in Talmud. Possibly influenced by Pythagorean **mysticism**, it teaches that the alphabet, along with the decimal base numbers, are the very building blocks of **Creation** and that mastery of their esoteric power allows the initiate to likewise create new realities, even animate matter. The esoteric significance of letters is the major concern of several other early mystical texts, such as Shi'ur Qomah and III Enoch, and continues as an ongoing feature of Kabbalistic writings.[2] In the **Zohar**, the Hebrew alphabet is equated with **Shekhinah**. Out of this, an exalted "word mysticism" emerges:

> Just as there are twenty-two letters of the Torah and prayer, so there are twenty-two letters in all the existent things of matter and body, because the world was created by their means … but the letters are clothed in matter … and within the letters, there the spiritual force of the Holy One, blessed be He, is dwelling … (*Toldot Yaakov Yosef*)

According to this ideology of language, Hebrew, letters are not just instruments, but actual forms of the divine. The unique sanctity and power of the Hebrew alphabet becomes a basis for defending the custom of prayer in Hebrew, even though Jewish law permits prayers to be recited in any language. For the same reason, Hebrew letters are considered important vehicles for **meditation**. Combining the idea of the alphabet as cosmic building blocks with the belief that each human is a microcosm, **Chasidism** teaches that every person is made up of the twenty-two letters. Given this reality, when properly "arranged," a righteous person becomes a *logos*, an embodiment of God's word (*Sefat Emet*, Ekev). Curiously, while a great deal of thought is given to the twenty-two consonents, a parallel metaphysics of vowels, already a well-articulated ideology in Greek thought in antiquity, did not really emerge until the medieval period (*Or haShekhal*). *SEE* SPEECH.

1. Idel, *Hasidism*, 335, 65, 70, 156–57. Also see Lauterbach, "The Belief in the Power of the Word," 293–300.
2. Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, 33–61.

Hechalot: (הכלות). "[Divine] Palaces/Temples." The first distinctly mystical movement in Jewish history, Ma'asei Merkavah, appeared in the late Greco-Roman period. The many and often fragmentary writings, known as "hechalot literature," mostly preserved in medieval copies, are the likely literary artifacts of that movement. The central elements of all Hechalot writings are accounts of mystical **ascents** into **heaven**, divine **visions**, and the **summoning** and control of angels, usually for the purpose of gaining insight into **Torah**. The *loci classicus* for these practices is the Chariot vision of Ezekiel (chapter 1) and the **Temple** vision of Isaiah (chapter 6). It is from this and the many extracanonical **apocalyptic lwritings**of heavenly visitations created by Greco-Roman Jewry that Hechalot literature emerges.

The title, *Hechalot*, derives from the divine abodes seen by the practitioner. In their visions, these mystics would ecstatically project themselves into the higher realms and journey through the seven stages of mystical **ascent**: the **seven heavens**, usually experienced as a celestial palace or Temple compound, and seven throne rooms.

Such a journey is fraught with great danger, and the adept must not only have made elaborate **purification** preparation to approach God, the essence of **purity**, but must also know the proper **incantations**, seals, and angelic **names** needed to get past the celestial guards, as well as know how to navigate the various forces at work inside and outside the palaces.

The literature sometimes includes fantastic and baffling descriptions of the precincts of heaven and its awesome denizens. The highly literal and overly explicit images of heavenly objects and their numbers ("four thousands of thousands of fiery chariots and ten thousand fiery torches amidst them …") common to this literature are probably meant, *reductio ad absurdum*, to convey the truly ineffable nature of the ecstatic experience. The literature is overwhelmingly a rhetoric of symbolic analogy.

At times, heavenly interlocutors will reveal **secrets** of the Torah. In some texts, the mystic's interest centers on the heavenly **music** and liturgy, usually connected with the angelic adorations mentioned in Isaiah 6:3. Both those who wrote Hechalot texts and those who later used them in their ascents would describe the music and **Prayer** language they heard while in the heavens. The mantra-like repetitive nature of many of these compositions seems meant to encourage further ascent.

Literary works that have survived in whole or in part include the texts known as Hechalot Rabbati, Hechalot Zutarti, III Enoch, Ma'aseh Merkavah, Masechet Hechalot, Chatom ha-Merkavah, Otiyyot Rabbi Akiba, and possibly reiyot Yehezkel. In addition, there are many fragmentary manuscripts that seem to belong to this genre, along with some magical texts, but the exact relationship of such texts to Ma'asei Merkavah and to each other is often not clear. *SEE* PALACE.

Hechalot Rabbati: "The Greater Palaces." This is perhaps the most intact surviving document of merkavah mysticism. This work describes the methods and experiences of ascending into the **seven heavens**. The work gives a detailed account of the perilous progress of a living **Soul** negotiating its way through heaven, including descriptions of the angelic guards and how to get past them, the many hazards, and what one could expect to see. In this work, the princely angel Anafiel serves as the guide to Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha, the narrator and presumed author. Hechalot Rabbati concludes with an apocalypse in which heavenly mysteries are revealed. Some versions have an additional material on the Sar Ha-Torah appended. This book has been highly influential in some branches of Jewish mysticism, particularly on the German Pietists and on the

Spanish Kabbalist, Joseph Gikkatilla. *SEE* ENOCH, BOOKS OF; ENOCH THIRD BOOK OF; HECHALOT.

Hechalot, Sefer: Alternate title for the book also known as III Enoch. *SEE* ENOCH, BOOKS OF.

Hechalot Zutarti: "The Lesser Palaces." A work of merkavah mysticism that has survived only as manuscript fragments and quotations found in other writings. Its major theme is expounding on the account of the **four Sages**. *SEE* HECHALOT.

Helios: The Greco-Roman god of the **sun**, and equivalent of the Egyptian god Ra, makes several appearances in Jewish contexts, a surprising phenomenon given that the Mishnah expressly forbids a Jew possessing celestial objects that could be construed as "religious." Most notably, he is clearly represented at the center of a mosaic **zodiac** on the floor of the Beta Alfa **synagogue**, an excavated Byzantine synagogue in northern Israel. Just as puzzling, Helios is included in adjuration texts that appear to be part of the **Hechalot** corpus, most famously in Sefer ha-Razim, which reflects a deep interest in the power of the sun.

Scholars are divided on what the presence of Helios means. Some argue this indicates that the Jewish communities that produced these were out-and-out syncretistic polytheists, fusing the worship of the God of Israel with Roman paganism. Other scholars, perhaps the majority, think these references to Helios signal a kind of tolerant Jewish "inclusive monotheism," more common than might seem intuitive, in late antiquity, in which pagan deities are demoted to the status of **Angels**, but are still counted as parts of the **host of heaven**. This latter theory is made for attractive by the fact that the Greek spelling, HLYWS, contains the letters YHW, an abbreviated form of the **Tetragrammaton**. Elsewhere we see lists of angels with the four-letter name of God embedded in their monikers, so Helios may have been regarded as on par with those celestial servants.[1]

1. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 251–252.

Hephzibah: The mother of the eschatological **Messiah**. Mentioned only in Sefer Zerubbabel, she is credited with playing a significant role at the end of times (beyond giving birth to the Messiah). A messianic warrior in her own right, she will slay two kings by wielding the wondrous rod of **Aaron**.

Herbs and Vegetables: As in most world cultures, Jews have used herbs for far more than dietary supplements and flavoring. Selected herbs are common

ingredients in medicines, potions, and poultices (Pes. 42b; J. A.Z. 2:2). Medicinal uses for herbs found in the **Talmud** include the following:

Asparagus: Beer or broth made from it is beneficial to both heart and eyes

Beets and onions: Good for general healing

Bitter vetch: Good for the bowels

Black cumin: Eases chest pain

Dates: For hemorrhoids and constipation

Garlic: Improves virility, increases circulation, and kills intestinal parasites

Lentils: Prevent croup

Milt: For teeth

Mustard and asparagus: General preventatives

Radishes and lettuce: Aid digestion

Small cucumbers: A laxative

In addition to these, some herbs were thought to have influence over supernatural forces. Fennel, for example, was prized for driving away evil spirits. Jewish magical texts of antiquity, like their Greco-Roman counterparts, used herbs in magical concoctions (ShR). Josephus, in particular, devotes considerable discussion to a mysterious "baras root" that had the power to "draw out" possessing **demons** (*War* 8.46–49). Mandrake has been an ingredient in **love** potions since biblical times (Gen. 30).

While most modern Jews no longer look to the herbal healing methods of their **ancestors**, there is a renewed interest in the topic, and some herbal treatments are enjoying a revival. *SEE* FOOD.; HEALING; PHARMACOPOEIA.

Hermes, the Books of: A collection of forty-two books attributed to either Hermes/Thoth, the Greek God, or Hermes Trismegistus, the mythic founder of the discipline of **Alchemy**. Most, if not all, of the books so identified were actually composed by anonymous theurgists, mystery cultists and mystics, some of which may have been Egyptian Jews.[1] *SEE* ALCHEMY..

1. Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists*, 403.

Heschel of Opatov, Abraham Joshua: Chasidic master (Russian, ca. 18th–19th century). Rabbi Joshua was a noted Chasidic Kabbalist who taught the doctrines

of **reincarnation** and regarded himself to have been reincarnated several times, including one incarnation as a High **priest** of ancient Israel.

Hexagram: Six-angled or six-cornered shapes are used throughout the world as a talisman against **evil**. In Judaism, the six-pointed Magen David is the religion's most distinctive modern symbol and a frequent seal incorporated into protective **amulets**.*SEE* SEAL, MAGICAL.

Hezekiah: King of Judah of the Davidic Dynasty (726– 697 BCE). One of the few kings to earn God's favor, Hezekiah enjoyed the counsel of the prophet **Isaiah** and merited a miraculous deliverance from the Assyrian armies of Sennacherib, which were smitten by angelic forces (2 Kings 17).

Hezyonot, Sefer ha-: "The Book of Visions." A kind of spiritual memoir and dream diary of **Chayyim Vital** , it contains some of Luria's teachings on **reincarnation**, along with Vital's accounts of ghostly **possession**, his personal **visions**, psychic experiences, encounters with mantics, and other mystical phenomena. The book offers an unusual window into the social world of a 16th-century Kabbalist.

Hillel Baal Shem: (Russian-Polish, early 18th century). An itinerant folk healer and **amulet** maker, one of the notable *baalei shem* who arose in Europe prior to the development of **Chasidism**. He is the author of the **segulot** manuscript, *Sefer ha-Cheshek*, and a work that instructs on metoposcopy, chiromancy, and **exorcism**, as well as magical formulae, as remedies for ailments.

Hillula: (הלולה). "Wedding." Also *ziyara* (Arabic, "visitation"), *aliyah ha-regel* (Hebrew, "pilgrimage"). Celebrations held at the gravesides of venerated scholars, rabbis, and faith healers. Largely unknown in Talmudic times, the custom arose in the Middle Ages, coinciding with the rise of saint veneration in Christian and Muslim societies.

There are appointed "holidays" (a *yom hillula*) for some figures, often on the yahrzeit, the anniversary of their death, which since the transfiguring death of Simon bar Yochai, has been referred to as "the **Wedding**." The most famous such day in Israel is the Lag B'omer (33rd Day of the Omer Count) hillula at the Safed grave of Rabbi Shimon, the Talmudic Sage, mystic, and purported author of the mystical tract, Sefer Zohar. Others include Choni ha-Ma'agel, the Talmudic rainmaker buried in Hatzor, the medieval healer Meir Baal ha-Nes in Tiberius, and **Baba Sali**, a modern folk healer, in Neivot.



Jews celebrate Hillula of Shimon bar Yochai—Photograph by Yolan Haik, with permission of the Israel Government Press Office. Photograph from Israel National Archive.

These events are lively social gatherings, freely mixing religious, commercial, and party atmospherics, with **food**, drinking, bonfires, marketing, worship, dancing, and Bar mitzvah celebrations. They also are the focal points for a widespread belief in **miracles**. Like Lourdes, these sites will attract pious petitioners seeking spiritual intervention for health, **fertility**, marital problems, and the like. Offerings are made—sacred books, bottles of olive oil and liquor, **Candles** (often tossed, or hurled en mass, into a huge brazier)—in hopes of soliciting a divine response.

Hiner Plet: "Catatonic." A deathlike trance state. Certain people would be stricken by a *hiner plet*, only to awaken with occult knowledge about the sins and transgressions of neighbors in the community. **demons** and punishing spirits were assumed to be the source of this **secret** knowledge (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot; ShB* 20).[1]

1. D. Ben-Amos and J. Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov [Shivhei ha-Besht]* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1970), 34–35; Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judaism*, 259–261.

Hiram: King of Tyre (ca. 7th century BCE), he is not to be confused with the donor/architect of the same name who constructed Solomon's Temple:

> And King Solomon fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass; and he was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill, to work all works in brass. (1 Kings 7:14)

This description, with its references to **wisdom**, insight, and skill, serve as the starting point for esoteric speculation about Hiram. Furthermore, the later Hiram

is condemned by Ezekiel for claiming to be god. Sages merge the King Hiram of **Solomon's** time and the King Hiram of the 7th century condemned in Scriptures, insisting that they were in fact one and the same.



Hiram was tormented for his crimes.

According to **Midrash**, God had granted him exceptionally long life, but this only led the king to think of himself as a deity. According to Baba Batra 75b, it was God's foreknowledge of Hiram's arrogance that made the deity ordain **Death** for all humanity:

> Rabbi Judah said in the name of Rab, "God said to Hiram: When I created the world, I looked and observed that you would rebel, thinking yourself a god. I therefore created holes and apertures in men." And according to others he said: "I saw that you would rebel and therefore decreed death over Adam the first person."

His hubris drove him to build a fabulous structure upon the sea, an inverted pyramid, which he dubbed the **seven heavens**. God's punishment for his arrogance was that he was overthrown by his own son-in-law, Nebuchadnezzar, who then forced Hiram to eat pieces of his own flesh until he died. The structure he built, on the other hand, was drawn intact down into the sea and will re-emerge in the Messianic Age. Another legend tells of him being brought alive into **heaven** like **Elijah**, only to be expelled into **Gehenna** after he showed the poor judgment to declare himself a god once he got there (Gen. R. 9:5; B.B. 75a; Yalkut Lech Lecha 247; BhM 111–12).

Hisda, Rabbi: Talmudic Sage (ca. 3rd–4th century). The leading oneiromancer in the **Talmud**, he expounds many of the axioms that have become the principal assumptions of Jewish **dream** interpretations (Ber. 55a). He also taught that the **Soul** of the departed lingers over its **Body** for seven days (Shab. 152b). Concerning his own death, his devotion to **study** made him immune to the **Angels of Death**, who had to break his phenomenal concentration before he could claim Hisda's soul (Mak. 10a).

Histakelut: (הסתכלות). "Vision." A **vision** experience, perhaps entailing a meditative technique involving creative visualization (*Synopse* #81; Zohar II:82a, 217a, 218b).

Hitbodudut: (התבודדות). "[Self] isolation." This term can refer to either physical isolation before God (*Likkutai MoHaRan* I, 52), or mental concentration (*Kad Kemach Torah* 427). In both cases, it is used in relation to **meditation** techniques. The term is used in radically different ways. Isaac of Acre specifically identifies it with the technique that Ben Azzai used when he "looked and died" in his exploration of **Pardes**, making this a very fraught enterprise (*Otzer Chayyim*). Nachman of Bratzlav is the most famous advocate for this practice, and his version of the technique does not seem so potentially lethal.

Hitkasherut: (התקשרות). "Attachment." Originally meaning "binding" in the contractual sense, this word came to be the term used for the spiritual practice of concentrating on words in order to unleash their spiritual and/or theurgic potential, or it can refer to the special bond formed between an esoteric master and his disciple. *SEE* KAVANAH.

Hod: (הוד). "Majesty." The eighth of the lower **sefirot**, it works in concert with Netzach to bring forth **Prophecy**—knowledge of divine purpose—in the lower worlds (Zohar I:203a). It is personified by **Aaron**. The meaning and role of this sefirah is one of the least explored or explained in the sefirotic system.

Hollander, Isaac, and John Isaac: Alchemists (Dutch, ca. 15th or 16th century). These two men, known only through their writings, *De Triplici Ordine Elixiris et Lapidis Theora* and *Opus Saturni*, were highly influential on later practitioners of the Great Art. Their collected writings were published in the 17th century under the title *Isaaci et J. I. Hollandi Opera Universalia et Vegetabilia sive de Lapide Philosophorum*. *SEE* ALCHEMY..

Holy of Holies: (קודש הקדשים/*Kodesh Kedoshim,* also *Lev ha-Olam; Devir*). The Holy of Holies is the innermost sanctum of the **Temple**, where the **Ark of the Covenant** resided. It was hidden behind a curtain and the High **priest** alone would enter it, and then only once a year, for the **Yom Kippur** ritual (Zohar III:66b). When King **David** moved the Foundation Stone into the Holy of Holies, the Sages feared that people might learn how to pronounce the **name of God** inscribed upon that rock, so they created two bronze guardian lions on **pillars** by the doorway. When someone entered with the intent of learning the name, the lions would roar, and the terror of the experience would blot the Name from the person's **memory** (PdRK 148a). The lions were no longer part of the Second Temple edifice, which is why it was possible for **Jesus** to steal the explicit **name of God** and use it for magical purposes (*Toldot Yeshu*). The Holy of Holies takes on an erotic connotation in the **Midrash** and **Kabbalah**, which describes it as the "**Wedding** chamber" of God and Israel (Tanh. B. folio 17; S of S R. 3:15–19). In **Zohar**, it is interpreted to be the "womb" of the divine feminine (III:296b).

Holy One, Blessed or Blessed be He: (הקדוש ברוך הוא/*ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu*). In rabbinic parlance, this is a common honorific for God. Often it is abbreviated as *HKB'H*. In the **Zohar**, however, the term specifically refers to the masculine dimension of the **Godhead** and is the divine name referring to the sefirah of Tiferet (I:178b; 195a).[1] The theurgic goal of all mystical practice is to reunite Tiferet with its divine-feminine counterpart, **Shekhinah**. This is the basis for the **kavanah Prayer** that is frequently used in Hasidic circles before performing a mitzvah:

> [I perform this] for the sake of the union of the Holy One Blessed be He, and His Shekhinah, to unite the name Y-H with V-H in a perfect union, in the name of all Israel.

1. Green, *Guide to the Zohar*, 47.

Holy Sparks: *SEE* NITZOTZ.

Holy Spirit: (רוח הקודש/*Ruach ha-Kodesh,* רוח אלהים/*Ruach Elohim*). The immanent presence of God in **Creation** and in the individual; enthusiasm (in the original Greek sense of the word, "filled with divinity"). It is the divine Presence that inspires individuals, such as **David** and **Bezalel**, to create sacred words and art (Me. 7a; PdRE 4; PR 3:4; *SY* 1:6–9, 6:1).

The **Talmud** teaches that many biblical figures not identified as **Prophets** in the TaNaKH, were in fact, seers. This status is merited because they conversed with divine entities. Citing the example of Sara, Rabbi Isaac states "she observed the divine will by means of the Holy Spirit" (Meg. 14a). Leviticus Rabbah 1:3 also declares the Holy Spirit the mechanism for **visions**, Prophets would observe [visions] by means of the Holy Spirit.

Moses was clothed in the Holy Spirit, continuously, granting him perpetual prophetic powers (*Kitvei Ramban* 2:297). It can also be a conduit for divine power; those who are possessed of the Holy Spirit have the power to revive the dead (M. Sot. 9:9; A.Z. 20b). There was controversy among the Talmudic sages as to whether prophecy continued to function in their own days as it did in biblical times.

Various forms of Jewish **mysticism** equate it with different aspects of the **Godhead**. Sefer Yetzirah links it with divine speech and the upper **sefirot**; the **Zohar** equates it with **Shekhinah** (I: 79a; II:43b**)**.

Medieval thinkers continue the Talmudic controversy over whether the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit amidst Israel still allows the possibility of true prophecy and knowledge of the divine will. Thus Hai ben Sherira Gaon (10th century) argues the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit amidst Israel makes the prophetic experience still attainable. In the *Kuzari* of Judah Ha-Levy, the Holy Spirit is the substance which serves as the substrate of the *Kavod,* the divine Glory that makes God apprehensible to mortals (II:4). Likewise, it is from the Holy Spirit that **Angels**, another visible manifestation of divinity, are formed (IV:25).

Chayyim Vital , the great systemizer of **Isaac Luria's** mystical teachings, returns to distinguishing the *Ruach ha-Kodesh,* which is attainable, from prophecy, which is no longer possible. According to Vital, the Spirit is what triggers embodied inspiration; it does not cause the "**Soul** to leave the **Body**." By contrast, the spirit of prophecy separates the higher soul from the body in order to disengage the human imaginative faculty and allow for a purer perception of divinity. Vital lists five forms that the Holy Spirit can take—a supernal light in the soul; an angelic **possession**; a visitation of **Elijah**; an ibbur (a beneficent spirit-possession by a dead saint); a dream-vision. These claims are based on kabbalistic tradition rather than an appeal to biblical prooftexts. *SEE* GLORY; RUACH ELOHIM.

Hoopoe: (דופי). A mythical ferocious bird that guarded the **Shamir worm** until Asmodeus helped **Solomon** steal it (Git. 67a–b; *Legends of the Jews*, 32–33).

Hormin: A **demons**, one of the children of **Lilith**. He possessed extraordinary speed. He was executed by the demonic authorities for making his presence visible to mortals (B.B. 73a).

Horn: (קרן/*Karan*). In Judaism, a horn is a symbol of power, of alarm, and of otherworldliness. In rabbinic tradition, **Cain** sprouted a horn from his forehead-—this is the "mark" that God gave him to protect him. As a result, Cain's semiblind grandson Lemach accidentally killed him because he mistook Cain for a game animal.

In early Christian tradition, **Moses** was thought to have horns, an idea derived from the language of Exodus 34:29. This idea is even enshrined in Michelangelo's statue of the prophet. Evidently this is based on a Latin mistranslation of the Hebrew word *keren*, which can mean either "horn" or "radiate" in Hebrew. This otherwise quaint confusion took on darker overtones during the Middle Ages when Jews were widely regarded to be minions of the Devil. The popular superstition that Jews concealed horns under their hats only added to the atmosphere of contempt and hatred that Jews had to endure. In fact, medieval Jews were required to wear a *pileum cornutum*, a "horned hat" (it resembled a Chinese "coolie" hat with a spiked peak). In some Christian countries, Jews were further required to affix horn-shaped figures on the doors of their **synagogues**, or horns were part of the "Jew's badge" worn on outer garments. All of which served as a kind of dark echo of the **myth** about the horned murderer, Cain, to whom Jews were constantly compared by Christian exegetes.[1]

1. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 44–52.

Horoscope: (נחוש על פי כוכבים). Records that use the appearance of the heavens and track the influence of celestial forces as a means to determine one's character, predict one's personal future, or diagnose illness. While there is one possible example of a horoscope (4Q186) among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, and the **Talmud** makes passing reference to **birth** predictions (Shab. 156a), Jewish interest in casting formal horoscopes is more clearly evident by the medieval period, when examples can be found in the Cairo Geniza. The mania for horoscopes (especially medical horoscopes) that marked the High Middle Ages and Renaissance is also evident among European Jews. *SEE* ASTROLOGY; ZODIAC.

Hospitality: Hospitality is highly valued in Judaism. It is important to show hospitality to spirits. **Abraham** is famed for the welcome he extended to the

three **Angels** (Gen. 18). There are many legends concerning **Elijah** that relate the consequences resulting from how particular people treated him when he appeared on their doorstep. The Babylonian Jewish custom of having a dargesh, a spirit bed, in one's home was a part of this belief. The Jews of the Ottoman Empire would welcome visiting **ghosts** by setting out chairs for them (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot* 22). There is also the **Sukkot** tradition of ushpizin, of welcoming the spirits of the **ancestor** into the **sukkah**.

Even **demons** need to be treated well, if only to prevent them from doing ill to the host. Thus, some **amulets** actually use the language of hospitality in their adjurations: "If you are hungry, eat! If you are thirsty, come drink! But if you are not hungry or thirsty … go back the way you came …!"

Host Desecration: The pernicious **myth** that Jews would steal the sacred wafers of the Roman Catholic mass in order to compulsively reenact the passion of **Jesus** was a popular medieval superstition, one that ultimately claimed several thousand Jewish lives and caused untold Jewish suffering over the centuries. The whole concept grew out of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, the Catholic belief that the wafer, once consecrated, actually became the flesh of Christ. And as actual flesh, it was popularly believed, it would presumably bleed and feel pain if stabbed or misused.

According to the narrative of Host desecration stories, Jews would steal or purchase wafers through bribes and then stab, crucify, or burn the **bread** in the service of **Satan**, their master. Between 1215 (when the doctrine of Transubstantiation was affirmed) and 1600, scores of such accusations were made in communities across Europe, with the result that suspected Jews, even whole Jewish communities, found themselves subject to inquisition, torture, and capital punishment. The Church hierarchy made several attempts to repudiate the calumny, but such efforts had only limited success. The accusation is closely related to the blood libel.

Host of Heaven: (צבא שמים/*Tzeva ha-Shamayim*). A term that can refer either to the stars and constellations or to the angelic court and army. It appears several times in the **Bible**, often with indeterminate meaning. In the book of Joshua, **Moses's** successor actually encounters the Sar Tzevaot, angelic commander of the host outside of Jericho (Josh. 3), which in different traditions is identified as either **Metatron** or **Michael**.

Hechalot literature starts to fuse the two ideas and by late antiquity, a number of Jewish texts talk about angels as the animating genii of stars and **planets**. In

time, this would lead to the amalgamation of native Jewish angel **magic** with **zodiac**-based gentile Hermetic magic. In texts like Sefer Raziel, there is an almost complete fusion of angelic identities with stars and their influence. *SEE* ADAT EL; ANGEL AND ANGELOLOGY

House of Study on High: *SEE*YESHIVA SHEL MALAH.

Huldah: This female prophet appears in 2 Kings 22:14 and helps identify a forgotten book of the covenant, probably the book we know today as Deuteronomy. According to the Sages, God gave her the particular mission to prophesy to the **women** of Israel. She was one of seven female prophets (Meg. 14a).

Hydromancy: (נחוש במים). The use of **water** for purposes of divining the future. There are multiple ways to use water in impetrated **divination**, such as combining it with **oil**, or dropping foreign objects in it (think tea leaves). Studying reflections on the surface of lakes and rivers for images, **Angels**, or **omens** is the most common form mentioned in Jewish sources. (Gen. 32:33; MdRI 1; *Sefer Zerubbabel* 1; *Reiyat Yehezkel*). There is a Greek-Christian text entitled the *Hydromancy of Solomon*. *SEE* DIVINATION; LECANOMANCY; RIVERS; SUMMONING.

Hyena: (צבוע/*Tzavua* or *Napraza*). In the Hebrew **Bible**, hyenas appear alongside satyrs and *lilot* (**Liliths**) in a list of evil creatures (Isa. 34:14). According to the **Talmud**, the hyena is a shape-shifting animal that evolves first into a bat, and finally into a **demon** (B.K. 15b; J. B.K. 2).

[contents]

I



Ibbur: (דבוק/עבור). “Impregnation/Cleaving.” These are generic terms for spiritual **possession**, usually beneficent, but not always. Also called a **maggid**, it is related to, but is not to be confused with, a **dybbuk**. An ibbur coexists inside a living **Body**, which already has a resident **soul**, usually for a short period of time (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot* 46; *Sha’ar ha-Gilgulim*). Some souls of **Righteous** saints are able to do this for the benefit of mankind, either to perform a special task through or to reveal a vital teaching to the possessed individual. Sometimes the ibbur does this on its own initiative, but more often a worthy mystical seeker deliberately induces the possession. To achieve this, a period of **purification** and preparation is necessary. In some ibbur tales, wearing a “sign of the covenant,” such as **tefillin**, is a prerequisite to such possession. Usually there is some kind of ecstatic practice involved. **Isaac Luria** preferred using an **incubation** ritual. A few Safed mystics wrote down testimonies of their ibbur possessions. It also

played a role in early **Chasidism**.[1] *SEE* MEDIUM; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY; SUMMONING.; XENOGLOSSIA AND AUTOMATIC WRITING.

1. Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judaism*, 101–19, 257–304, 404.

Ibn Ezra, Abraham: Biblical commentator and astronomer/astrologer (Spanish, ca. 11th century). Most famous for his rationalist and linguistic commentary on the **Torah**, Ibn Ezra was also an avid devotee of **astrology** and wrote *Mishpatei ha-Mazzalot* ("Rules of the Zodiacal Signs"), a seven-part work about the influence of the stars over the sublunary plane in general and humans in particular. He was convinced of the power of the stars over the lives of mortals, and he believed astrology belonged among the canons of scientific knowledge.

Part of the work was devoted to using astrology in the diagnosis and treatment of illness. He incorporated his theories into his Torah commentaries, including the novel proposal that the **Urim and Thummim** of the High **priest** were actually a kind of astrolabe. His fame in these matters was such that a few of his astrological works were translated into Latin. One legend claims he offered a naturalistic interpretation of **demons** and was punished for his skepticism (*Otzar Nechmad* 95–96). Though Ibn Ezra taught virtually no esoterica aside from his beliefs in astrology, many legends concerning him as a master of the occult appeared throughout the Middle Ages after his death. There is, for example, at least one tradition claiming Ibn Ezra made a **golem** (Pseudo Sa'adia commentary to *Sefer Yetzirah*).

Ibn Yachya, Gedaliah: Rabbi, Talmudist, and exorcist (Italian, ca. 16th century). He is the author of **Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah**. It contains fantastic and supernatural traditions concerning the heavenly bodies, **Creation**, the **soul**, **magic**, and evil spirits.

Idol, Idolatry: (lsp/*pesel;* עבודת אלילים/*avodat elilim,* also *Teref; Shikutz*). A physical representation of deity. The refusal to make a visual image of divinity is called "aniconism," and is most evident in the traditions of Judaism and Islam. Physical representations of the gods were critical to the religions of the ancient Near East, so the Israelite rejection of any physical image of divinity was one of the most revolutionary aspects of the cult of **Yahweh**. It was so incomprehensible to Pagans that some Greco-Roman writers even accused Jews of being atheists.[1]

The misunderstanding was mutual. It is clear from the biblical testimonies that the **Prophets** believed Pagans worshipped the idols themselves *as gods*. This

religious phenomenon, believing an object to be actual genie or spirit, is called *fetishism*. Clearly, many early ancient "Pagans in the pews" believed this to be the case, with some actually thinking that the idols ate the offerings brought to them and ascribing miraculous powers to the idolatrous object itself.[2]

More sophisticated classical Pagans, however, understood an idol to be something different—more than a mere representation of a god, but less than the actual god itself. The purpose of making a physical image of a god was, for the sophisticated Pagan, *to attract that god's attention*. An idol was a kind of "god magnet," meant to invite the god's presence into the shrine, home, or whatever locale where the idol was erected. Another way of imagining an idol is as somewhat akin to a **voodoo doll**. Whatever happened to or for the idol would be telegraphed to the actual god. Thus, cleaning and clothing the image, burning pleasant smelling **incense**, making offerings of **food**, or even human lives, before an idol would please and comfort the god it represented, making him or her more positively inclined toward the devotee.

This is the logic behind the **golden calf** incident (Ex. 34). The Israelites did not simply decide to make up a new and different god. They were still intent on worshipping YHVH, but they felt compelled to make an idol of God in the form of a calf (a bull, really) in order to attract the attention and ensure the continuing presence of YHVH in their midst, which they felt was missing during the absence of **Moses**.

From ancient texts of the cultures surrounding Israel, it is clear that for an idol to function, one had to do more than merely construct the image. Idols were "activated" by means of initiation **rituals**. Thus, in both Mesopotamian and Egyptian magical texts we have a ceremony called the "opening of the mouth" rite by which the idol was activated and the presence of the god was drawn to it.[3]

The Hebrew **Bible** is clearly most concerned with the actual making and veneration of images as described above. Yet as religious idolatry has fallen out of fashion in the West, the idea of "idolatry" has taken on a more figurative meaning, being equated with the worship of anything outside God (money, success, sports, and even religious objects) that should not be of ultimate concern.

The impulse toward fetishism, however, remains a universal human preoccupation, and as is evidenced by some of the entries in this book, it is still an issue for some Jews.

1. Schafer, *Judeophobia*, 21, 23.
2. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 17–20.

3. J. Kugel, *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 73–85.

Idra: (עדרא). "Threshing Floor" or "*Goren*." There has been some supernatural import to threshing floors since biblical times. Threshing floors are favored locations for God or angels to become manifest (I Chron. 13:9; 2 Sam. 24:16). The latter site becomes the eventual location of the **Temple**. In the **Zohar**, an idra is a mystical assembly in the Galilee, or a conclave of members of a mystical brotherhood that gathers when one of their number is dying and supernal **secret**s are about to be revealed. The two chapters by this name, Idra Rabbah (Zohar III:127b–145a) and Idra Zuta (III: 287b–296d) included in the printed editions of the Zohar. **Chayyim Vital** reports having visited the site of the Zoharic conclaves.

Igeret ha-Kodesh: "The Holy Letter." A medieval mystical **sex** manual attributed to **Nachmanides**. It teaches that human sexuality is a mimesis of the divine union that occurs in the **Pleroma** (literally, *merkavot*), hinting at the idea that sex serves a theurgic function in sustaining the celestial order:

> Such is the secret of man and woman in the ways of Kabbalah. Thus, this [human sexual] union is a matter most elevated [when] it is done properly, and the greater secret is that the *merkavot* [also] unite, this one to that, in the manner of male and female. (1:49)

To achieve this influence, it instructs the reader about spiritual intention while having sex, sexual positions and their relative merits, even the direction to be oriented while having sex. *SEE* BODY; ZIVVUGA KADISHA..

Igeret Sod ha-G'ulah: A 16th-century anthology of supernatural and folk tales about the Jewish community written by Abraham Eliezer ha-Levi.

Iggulim v'Yosher: (עגלים וישר). "Circle and Line." A Kabbalistic term which refers to the "**marriage**" of divine masculine and feminine attributes. The most vivid example of the spiritual-sexual use of this term is in the Lurianic cosmogony, in which a *yosher* of divine light penetrates the *iggul* of empty space created by **tzimtzum**, giving birth to the created order (*Derech Mitzvotecha* 76b–77a; *Eitz Chayyim*, Drash Iggulim v'Yosher). This conceptual model is used to frame a wide range of metaphysical phenomena. *SEE* ZIVVUGA KADISHA.

Igrat or Agrat: (עגרת). The **night** demoness of harlotry, she is a **succubus** who seduces men in their **sleep** and gathers their **nocturnal emissions**. In **Kabbalah**, she is listed among the **four demon queens**, the mothers of all demons.

Reflecting the rabbinic belief that evil spirits procreate, this demon is sometimes mentioned with a proper matronymic **Hebrew name**, *bat Malkat*, “daughter of **Malkat**.” One tradition proposes that she herself was the product of a human-demon coupling.

In the most elaborate account concerning her, she had intercourse with **David**, and from his royal **semen** she gave birth to both the gentile kings who would become his enemies (not unlike Morgan LaFaye and Arthur) and to **Asmodeus**, the King of Demons:

> Then came two women harlots to King Solomon (1 Kings 3:6). They were Lilith and Igrat. Lilith who strangles children because she cannot make of them a veil for herself [having her own demon children does not yield her the merit that comes from fulfilling the commandment to “be fruitful and multiply”] to serve as a hiding place for her. And the second is Igrat. One night King David slept in the camp in the desert, and Igrat coupled with him in his dream. And he had emission, and she conceived and bore Adad [king of Edom]. When they asked him, “What is your name?” he said, “Sh’mi Ad, Ad Sh’mi [My name is Ad, Ad is my name],” and they called him Ashm’dai. He is Ashm’dai, king of the demons, who deprived Solomon of his kingship and sat on his throne [he was Solomon’s demon doppelganger] and therefore he was of the seed of the king of Edom (1 Kings 11:14), for he came from the side of the kingdom of evil … All [the four queens of the demons, Lilith, Igrat, Mahalath and Naamah] and all their cohorts give birth to children, except Lilith … [1]

She is mentioned in the **Talmud** as a demon who communes with **witches**. The spiritual interventions of **Chanina ben Dosa** and **Abaye** curbed her malevolent power over humans (Pes. 110a and 112b; Num. R. 12:3; **Bachya**’s comments on Gen. 4:22).

1. Patai, *Gates to the Old City*.

Illusion: Some Sages ascribe the magical feats seen among the gentiles to feats of illusion—what we today call stage magic. Others regard such wonders to be real, but inferior to the miraculous feats credited to biblical and rabbinic heroes (Sanh. 65a). The Sages rule that those who use only sleight of hand to perform magic are not technically wizards, and therefore not subject to the penalty for **witchcraft**:

> A sorcerer, if he actually performs witchcraft, he is culpable; but not if he merely creates illusions. (M. Sanh. 11.1)

SEE LAW AND THE PARANORMAL.; MAGIC; SORCERY; THEURGY.

Image, Divine: (דמיון/*Dimyon*). According to Genesis 1, humanity shares a commonality with God not found in other parts of God's **Creation**; humanity is made in God's likeness (*demut*) and image (*tzelem*). Almost all schools of Jewish **mysticism** teach that there is a unique affinity between God and man, that there is more continuity than disjuncture between divine and human nature.

Still, the exact nature of the divine "image" that God granted humanity is a matter of debate in Jewish occult tradition. In **Pesikta de-Rav Kahana**, Sages accept that the divine **glory** often appears in anthropomorphic manifestations:

> A man's wisdom lights up his face (Eccles. 8:1). Rabbi Yudan says, "Great is the power of the prophets, who compare the image of the dynamis above to a human image." "I heard a voice from the middle of Ulai calling out"(Dan. 8:16). Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Simeon, "There is another verse clearer than this: 'and on top, upon this resemblance of a throne, there was the semblance of a human form.' " (Ezek. 1:26)[1]

But it is less clear about what is the fundamental resemblance between God and the human being. While non-esoteric rabbinic texts focus on the **soul** as an analogy for God (Ber. 10a—the soul fills and animates the body just as God fills and animates the universe), **Sefer Yetzirah** seems to regard speech, and the capacity that grants us for creativity, to be the unique way man mirrors God. **Shi'ur Qomah** implies that the actual physical shape of humanity is a kind of homunculus of the divine form. The **Circle of the Unique Cherub** similarly considered the human form to be made in the image, not of God proper, but in the image of the divinely emanated image of the **Unique Cherub** (**Baraita de Yosef ben Uziel**). Only slightly less anthropomorphic, the **Zohar** regards the human shape to be a **microcosm** of the **sefirot**, the divine **emanations**, rather than of God in actuality.[2] **Eleazar of Worms** claims there are ten divine features in every human being: the soul, facial expressions, the senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch, speech, walking upright, **wisdom**, and insight (*Sodei Razaya*). *SEE* ADAM; ADAM KADMON; BODY; FACE OF GOD; GODHEAD; VISION.

1. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 37.

2. J. Dan, "Imago Dei" in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, Cohen and Mendes-Flohr (New York: Free Press, 1987), 473–78. Also see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*.

Imagination: To the Jewish rational philosophers, the imaginative faculty is inferior and (should be) subordinate to the intellect. In some cases, they even regarded imagination to be a problem, an impediment to accurate theological

understanding (*Moreh Nevukhim* I:73; II:34). For the Jewish mystic, however, imagination is the key to the ecstatic experience.[1] It is through imaginative visualization, sometimes called **reiyat ha-lev**, that the practitioner is able to comprehend the true nature of the **sefirot** and to experience **visions** of divine **glory** (Zohar I:103a; *Shir Ha-Kavod*; Ber. 6a). *SEE* CHERUB, THE UNIQUE.; FACE OF GOD; HEART; MEDITATION.

1. G. Hartman, "Imagination," in Cohen and Mendes-Flohr, *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, 452–72. Also see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*.

Immersion: (תבילה/*Tevilah*, also *Mikvah*). Immersion in **water** for the purposes of **ritual purity** is part of the system of priestly purity outlined in the **Torah**, which includes partial (the **hands**) and total **Body** immersion, as well as the immersion of objects used in ritual contexts. Originally, being in a state of ritual purity was important only in the sacred areas of the Israelite camp in the desert and to the **tabernacle** at its center:

> For the man who is unclean must … bathe himself in water, and by evening he will be clean. If an unclean man fails to purify himself in this way, he must be cut off from the community for he will defile the sanctuary of the Eternal. (Num. 19:17–19)

Such places were, in effect, an extension of **heaven** (or the **Garden of Eden**) that intrudes into mundane space, so one had to be pure enough to operate in these heavenly spheres (*Yalkut Reubeni* 31b). Initially such rules of immersion mostly affected the **priests** and Levites who had to work in these zones. The one exception was that the whole Israelite community was required to immerse in anticipation of receiving the Torah. In time some aspects of ritual purity were applied to other Jews (Yev. 47b; Nid.).

Mayim chayyim, or living water, is necessary to effect such **purification**. In practice this means either a natural body of water (**sea**, lake, or **river**) or a **mikvah**, a ritual pool drawing part of its water directly from a natural source, like rainwater. The fact that human hands do not draw such water, that it flows uncontaminated directly from the higher realms, is the source of its power. Thus contact with this heavenly flow cleanses one and prepares one for contact with other heavenly forces,

> [H]ow is it possible to catch sight of them [the angelic hosts] and see what RWZNYM Adonai God of Israel does? He will complete it [preparatory immersion ritual] every day at sunrise and will wash himself from sin and from wrong … [1]

Chasidism adds to this other interpretations, such as that the water signifies the **sefirot**, the divine overflow, or that it represents the totality of undifferentiated oneness. It also stands for the womblike watery **olam ha-tohu**, "world of concealment," prior to new birth/creation (*Reshit Chochmah,* Sha'ar ha-Ahavah 11; *Sefer Ha-Chinuch* 173).

The underlying logic of ablution, that one must be in a state of purity when in contact with divine space or things, was eventually extended to both the quest for mystical union with the divine and even the encounter of the **soul** with God in the afterlife. Thus in the **Hechalot** literature, an initiate seeking to ascend into heaven would undergo ablution as part of the ritual purification beforehand. The process of **taharah**, purifying a corpse in preparation for **burial**, follows the same logic. [2]

Ablution for the soul as well as the body is also a feature found in some mystical and non-canonical Jewish documents. According to these texts, souls of the dead must go through purification by ablution in the *Nahar DeNur*, the celestial **River of Light**, before entering Paradise (*Reshit Chochmah* chapter 11, #30; I Enoch 17:5).

Ritual immersion can also be used for magical purposes beside preparatory purification (*Hechalot Rabbati*; *Sefer ha-Malbush*). It also has magical properties. One Chasidic tradition teaches that if a man immerses himself while his wife is in labor, he will ease her **birth** pangs.[3]

1. N. Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent: Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text* (New York: SUNY Press, 1989), 33.

2. Dennis, "Purity and Transformation," 51–64.

3. Klein, *A Time to Be Born*, 93, 144.

Impotence: The quest to overcome impotence is a major preoccupation of men throughout history, and there is a large corpus of potency spells, potions, and **rituals** that have come down to us from antiquity. Jews, too, shared in this preoccupation.[1] **The Song of Songs**, with its erotic themes, provided a lot of the language that appears on **amulets**, with fraught phrases such as, "I say: I will scale the palm; let me grip its branches" (7:9). Full-blown **incantations** appear in many magical books, such as this formula manual found in the **Cairo Geniza**:

> To release someone who is "bound": Let him write on a leaf of pomegranate, and drink it in wine. This is what you should write (magic figures and letters) "You, holy symbols and characters, loosen and make fit the big sinew of Ploni ben Ploni …" (T-S K 1.91) [2]

1. W. Davies, “Magic, Divination, and Demonology Among the Hebrews and their Neighbors,” *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, Vol. 15 (1899): 35.

2. Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 178.

Incantations, Spells, and Adjurations: (כשוף/*Kishuf;* לחש/*Lachash*, also *Kesem; Chever; Mashiva*). An incantation or a spell is a spoken word, phrase, or formula of power, often recited as part of a larger **ritual**, which is recited in order to affect a magical result. Most cultures have some idea about words having supernatural constructive powers, but nowhere is this belief stronger than in Judaism.[1] Both the **Bible** and Jewish **mysticism** emphasize that God created the universe by means of a series of “speech acts” (Gen. 1–2; Ps. 33:6). Humanity is regarded to be the only one of God’s mortal creations with the power of speech (excluding the occasional miraculous **donkey**), implying that our words can, under certain conditions, have the same constructive (and destructive) power.[2]

Jewish belief in the efficacy of spells, or “constructive language,” is premised on three assumptions:

1. There is special power inherent in the **names of God**.[3]
2. There is special power in the words and phrases that God speaks (i.e., the words of the **Torah** and the Hebrew Bible).[4]
3. The **Hebrew alphabet** itself is supernatural in origin, which means that using Hebrew letters in certain combinations is a source of special power, even when it has no semantic value to the adept.[5]

Spells may be either “theurgic” or “magical” in character. Usually, the belief underlying the use of theurgic spells is that God has in some way delegated that power/authority to the adept, or that one can arrogate or alter the will or functions of God. An example of this appearing in the **Talmud** is part of a ritual remedy for a persistent **fever** (a potentially lethal condition in the ancient world) that invokes the divine power over fire:

> O thorn, O thorn, not because thou art higher than all other trees did the Holy One, blessed be He, cause His [fiery] Shekhinah to rest upon thee, but because thou art lower than all other trees did He cause His Shekhinah to rest upon thee. And even as thou saw the fire [kindled] against Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah and didst flee from before them, so look upon the fire [i.e., fever] of so-and-so and flee from him. (Shab. 67a)

“Magical” incantations, by comparison, are “autonomous”; they do not explicitly involve spiritual entities at all. Often a magical spell or incantation is simply

addressed to the object to be influenced. Thus, a truly magical incantation most closely parallels the word power of God Himself. This curative spell for freeing a bone lodged in the esophagus appears in the same passage as the above theurgic incantation: One by one go down, swallow, go down one by one (*Shab* 67a).

Incantation phrases are also a form of “heightened speech,” not unlike poetry, as illustrated by this spell against an abscess:

> Let it indeed be cut down, let it indeed be healed, let it indeed be overthrown; Sharlai and Amarlai are those angels who were sent from the land of Sodom to heal boils and aches: bazak, bazik, bizbazik, mismasik, kamun kamik, thy colour [be confined] within thee, thy colour [be confined] within thee, thy seat be within thee, thy seed be like a *kalut* [species unknown] and like a mule that is not fruitful and does not increase; so be thou not fruitful nor increase in the body of So-and-so. (*Shab* 67a)

As such, there are a number of distinctive stylistic features present in incantations. These can include: divine names of power, rhythm, nonsense words, foreign words, and reversals.

Repetition, usually done three or seven times, or by another number symbolically relevant to the issue at hand, is the premier aspect of constructive words of power (Shab. 66b). Thus we find a teaching in the Talmud, for example, that reciting a verse containing the phrase “Voice of the Lord” seven times thwarts evil spirits at **night**.

An incantation meant to undo the effects of a given event or phenomenon will often include elements of **reversal**, reciting a word or phrase backwards in some fashion. An example would be this adjuration for shifting a fever from the victim to an inanimate receptacle,

> Thy burden be upon me and my burden be upon thee.

In Pesachim 112b, we read that one afflicted with an ocular **disease** should recite the word **shabriri** (blindness) repeatedly in the phrase: “My mother has cautioned me against *shabriri*.” With each repetition, the speaker should reduce one letter from the word: *shabriri, shabrir, shabri, shabr, shab, sha* … magical ritual of reducing the word is intended to yield a parallel reduction in the severity of the illness (also see Zohar I:1179a; *Keter Paz* ad loc).

Spells can include rhymed or nonsense phrases that have minimal or no semantic value (*voces mysticae*). Rather, rhythmic meaningless arrangements of words and phrases are used for the illocutionary or mantra-like effect, or for a

sympathetic result, or because these words are understood to be meaningful to heavenly powers, if not the adept. For example, to fend off an evil water spirit, the Talmud recommends intoning this:

> *Lul shafan anigeron anirdafon*, I dwell among the stars, I walk among thin and fat people. (Pes. 112a)

While the second clause of this spell is strange enough, the first clause of the spell is neither **Hebrew** nor Aramaic; by all indications it is just gibberish. This feature, common to Greco-Roman magic, emerges in Jewish circles in late antiquity. [6]

Akin to nonsense phrases, incantations often include *nomina barbara*, the use of foreign words, especially nouns/names. This feature of Jewish spells goes back to the Babylonian tradition of using archaic Sumerian words in their incantations, and becomes characteristic of Jewish incantations by the Greco-Roman period. With the later decline of Hebrew and Aramaic as a spoken language, these languages themselves become *lingua magica* for many spell casters, both Jewish and gentile. RaSHI explains that an integral part of spell casting involves reciting words that may be incomprehensible to the enchanter (Commentary, Sot. 22a).

The use of names of power is a pervasive aspect of all Hebrew/Jewish spells. The **names of God**, angels, the righteous dead, even one's mother, are considered critical to giving an incantation efficacy (Shab. 66b). Often the names are encrypted in **Atbash** form or in other occult methods. Spells from late antiquity are often promiscuous in the powers they invoke, freely mixing Jewish and Pagan entities. One Greco-Egyptian spell calls upon "First angel of [the god], of Zeus, Iao, and you, **Michael**, who rule heaven's realm, I call, and you, **archangel** Gabriel. Down from Olympus, **Abraxas**, delighting in dawns, come gracious who view sunset from the dawn."

Magical incantations that appear in the Talmud (and are therefore presumably sanctioned by at least some Sages) mostly serve the functions of **healing** and protection. In tractate Shabbat 67a–b, one Sage gives explicit sanction to the use of **magic** if it is done solely for the purposes of healing. Outside the Talmudic/Midrashic tradition proper, there are spells for **summoning** angels, **love** spells, and "binding" spells intended to **curse** or thwart a rival in love, business, or other personal matters. While rabbinic authorities have never endorsed the latter forms of incantations, they are more tolerant of spells that enhance goals the Sages endorse, such as healing, or spells meant to enhance the

learning of Torah. These latter two types are perhaps the most common in Jewish literature.

Tolerance for the use of spells can vary between different Jewish communities or geographic regions. The Babylonian Talmud preserves multiple examples of spells, mostly of a medicinal nature (see especially tractates Pesachim, Shabbat, and Berachot), while the Palestinian Talmud has virtually none. We know that at least some Jews in Palestine engaged in spell casting, because we have a few magical texts from that region and period. Evidently, the difference between the two Talmuds reflects something of the respective "official" attitude among the Sages of those regions toward spellcraft.

The types of incantations recorded continue to expand in number and variety of purpose throughout the Middle Ages. In some theurgic manuals like Sefer Razim and **Book of the Responding Entity**, there appear a number of spells based on astrological power (what Renaissance adepts would dub "natural magic").

In expressly magical texts, like Sefer Raziel, there occasionally appear incantations of personal power, to "receive all desire." These spells completely parallel gentile magic, involving magical materials, **fire** and water, invoking the names of governing angels, and throwing something of value with magical names and phrases inscribed on it into the proper element (fire, seas, etc.). Treasure-locating spells also appear in medieval magical manuals. What status many of these spells had in "normative" Jewish circles that sanction "beneficent" adjurations is almost impossible to judge. Again, spells recorded in the works of later religious authorities tend to be limited to the same areas tolerated by Talmudic authorities: incantations for better memorizing Torah, invoking an angel or **ibbur**, and for protection against medical or supernatural misadventure. *SEE* AMULET; LANGUAGE; MAGIC; RAZIEL, SEFER; RAZIM, SEFER HA-; SEGULAH Or Segulot; SORCERY; SWORD OF MOSES; WITCH AND WITCHCRAFT.

1. Lauterbach, "The Belief in the Power of the Word," 287–89.
2. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 166–67.
3. J. Dan, *The Heart and the Fountain: An Anthology of Jewish Mystical Experiences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 101–4.
4. Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent*, 85–87.
5. Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, 45–61.
6. P. C. Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality*, A. H. Armstrong (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 481–504.

Incantation Bowls or Demon Bowls: These are **amulets** used by the Jews of Mesopotamia and Syria in late antiquity to protect their homes from **evil** spirits.

The bowls that have survived to this day, the largest cache being recovered at the site of ancient **Nippur**, are ceramic and covered with magical **incantations**, usually in Aramaic, but sometimes in **Hebrew**, Mandaic, or Arabic. This famous Aramaic example, which invokes the protection of **Metatron,** is directed primarily against **Lilith**, though like many other examples, there is something of a "shotgun" approach, also demanding protection from other classes of **demons**, **curses**, **witches and witchcraft**,

> You are bound and sealed, all you demons and devils and Liliths, by that hard and strong, mighty and powerful bond with which are tied Sison and Sisin … The evil Lilith, who causes the hearts of men to go astray and appears in the dream of the night and in the vision of the day, who burns and casts down with nightmare, attacks and kills children, boys and girls—she is conquered and sealed away from the house and from the threshold of Bahram-Gushnasp son of Ishtar-Nahid by the talisman of Metatron, the great prince who is called the Great Healer of Mercy … who vanquishes demons and devils, black arts and mighty spells and keeps them away from the house … Vanquished are the black arts and mighty spells, vanquished the bewitching women, they, their witchery and their spells, their curses and their invocations … Vanquished and trampled down are the bewitching women, vanquished on earth and vanquished in heaven. Vanquished are the constellations and stars. Bound are the works of their hands. Amen, Amen, Selah.[1]

As shown in the translation above, the bowls are usually tailor-made for a specific individual or family, and all the people to be protected are named in the text of the incantation. Often the home and property are also included. The incantations usually consist of curses against demons, spirits of illness, the **evil eye**, witches, and/or all generic misfortunes.[2] In these spells, God and/or a variety of protective **Angels** are adjured to enforce the curse and guarantee the efficacy of the protective charm. Usually written in a spiral pattern on the inside surface of the bowl, **permutations** of the **names of God** and/or **magic squares** and **circles** are often part of the protective formulae. Some bowls will have crude illustrations of demonic figures, often portrayed as shackled, contained by a drawn box or border, or otherwise trapped.



Incantation bowl

The exact rituals by which these bowls were created and activated are now lost, but there is a hint that preparation may have involved using a **cemetery**, either as a source for the clay or as the grounds on which the bowl was prepared.

Some of these caldrons have been discovered by archaeologists buried under the doorways of excavated homes. They were either buried inverted, or made in **pairs** and buried against each other lip to lip, evidently creating a space to "catch" any demons rising from the underworld. In some homes, there were multiple installations. Other rituals associated with the bowls apparently involved writing the name of an offending demon on the bowl with a series of binding adjurations and then breaking it.

Even though the custom of burying demon bowls disappeared from Jewish custom (and Jewish memory) by the time of the Middle Ages, stepping on a threshold is still considered bad luck, reflecting an ongoing anxiety about liminal zones, such as doors and windows, places of transition where malevolent forces can gain entry.

1. Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 229.
2. Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 15–20, 124–98.

Incense: (קטורת/*Ketoret; Bosem*). Incense had a significant role in the sacrificial cult of YHVH. Part of its function was symbolic, a mimetic rendering of the **clouds** that once blanketed Sinai. God was revealed there. In the **Temple**, the cloud of incense also served as a shield against the High **priest** seeing too much of God's **glory** (Ex. 30; 1 Kings 7; M. Suk. 4:5; Suk. 43b).

According to the **Talmud**, the incense used in the Temple was made in quantities of 368 *maneh* (measures); one measure for each daily offering during the year, with three extra measures for **Yom Kippur** >(Ker. 6a). The **Book of**

Jubilees describes it as made up of seven ingredients: **frankincense**, galbanum, stacte, nard, **myrrh**, costum, and spices (16:21–31). An alternate list from **apocryphal** literature is: saffron, spikenard, reed, cinnamon, myrrh, frankincense, and mastic. Rabbinic tradition specifies twelve (M. Tam. 6:2; Yoma 1:5). One tradition claims the **Angel of Death** gave the formula to the Jewish people (Shab. 89a). Any attempt to duplicate the Temple formula for incense was forbidden after the destruction of the sanctuary by the Romans.

In **Zohar**, incense is a physical symbol of **Chesed**, which is an ascendant in the morning, which is when the priests are instructed to burn it (III:8a, 11a, 30b).

Incense also served as a component in theurgic rituals. In the book of Numbers, **Aaron** used incense in his effort to combat a supernatural pestilence that was decimating the Israelites (chapter 17). It draws the **sefirot** together and unites them harmoniously, one to another (Zohar I:230a; II:219a–b; III:105a). Since incense seems to be soothing to and/or have power over evil entities (Zohar, ibid.), it is sometimes used for both **demons** summoning rites and **exorcisms**. This very reason is sometimes given as the rationale for why Jews should not wear perfumes during the period of mourning—mourners are spiritually vulnerable to demonic attack, so one should avoid doing (or emitting) anything to attract demonic interest.

Incubation: (שאלת חלום). The practice of sleeping, usually in a sacred location, in order to induce a divinatory or veridical **dream**, or for the purpose of communing with a numinous entity. Those seeking to commune with God, **Angels**, divine voices, or the dead, use incubation techniques to do so. The practice of incubation has a long, multicultural history (see, for example, the *Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* by Oppenheim). And methods vary greatly. In the ancient Near East, dream incubation usually involves a preparatory **ritual** (often an offering or **sacrifice**) and sleeping in a place of known numinous power (a shrine, a temple, or a sacred water source). Incubation was widely practiced in all the societies around ancient Israel, and it should not come as a surprise that Israelites also engaged in this practice. There are multiple such events in the **Bible**, either described, or alluded to, such as the "covenant of the chunks" in Genesis 15.

The key word to look for in the Hebrew Bible is *darash*, "inquire," as in "David inquired of the Lord." *Darash* is a technical word for "divined" or "performed an augury." There were several ways to do this—sacred **lots** (the **Urim and Thummim**), consult a living oracle (a **Prophet** or "man of God"), or

perform an incubation (see 1 Sam. 28:6 for the complete list). The most complete description of an incubation ritual appears in 1 Kings 3, where **Solomon** goes to a shrine at Gibeon and, after making sacrifices, **sleeps** there and receives a divine promise concerning his monarchy. There are many variations on this found elsewhere in the Bible. **Jacob** has an unsolicited dream **vision** while sleeping on the future location of an Israelite shrine [**Beth El**] (Gen. 28). **Samuel** has a comedic incubation while an attendant sleeping in the **tabernacle** at Shiloh (1 Sam. 3). Other likely, if not explicitly, incubations occur with **Abraham** (Gen. 15); **Zechariah** (Zech. 4); **David** (2 Sam. 12:15–23); Nathan (2 Sam. 7); and **Isaiah** (Isa. 6). Zechariah experienced multiple dream visions, but it is unclear whether he elicited them (Zech. 4).[1] Apparently some Israelites also used incubation for the purposes of **necromancy** by sleeping on or at graves. The prophet Isaiah roundly condemns this practice (Isa. 8:19–22, 19:3).

The Talmudic Sages believed that **omens** and revelations could be derived from dreams, but did not encourage or document any methods for intentionally producing such experiences. The Merkavah mystics did: techniques called *she'lot chalom*, "dream questions," for drawing down the **Sar ha-Torah**, "[Angelic] Prince of the Torah" and the *Sar ha-Halom*, "The Prince of Dreams," or the angels Azriel, Ragsiel, and/or Rabyoel. A number of such incubation techniques are recorded in the **Hechalot** literature and they were replicated and elaborated upon by medieval Kabbalists.

After the destruction of the Temple, incubations were sometimes attempted by sleeping overnight in a **synagogue**, though most practices do not specify a particular location (*SCh* 80, 271, 1556). Magical textbooks such as **Sefer ha-Razim** and *Harba de-Moshe* describe similar practices. **Isaac Luria** was an avid practitioner,[2] and it was a familiar practice mentioned in early modern European texts (*Shivhei ha-BeSHT* 1, 7). And, of course, a prophetic dream (sort of) is key to the plot of *Fiddler on the Roof.*

Preparatory techniques for incubation include **fasting** and **immersion**, the reciting of **Prayers** and **psalms**, **summoning** angels, and **incantations**. *SEE* DIVINATION; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY

1. F. Flannery-Daily, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests: Jewish Dreams in Hellenistic and Roman Eras* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 269.

2. L. Fine, "The Contemplative Practice of Yihudim in Lurianic Kabbalah," in *Jewish Spirituality*, Green, vol. 2, 70–98.

Incubus: (חלום בלהות). A male spirit who copulates with human females, usually while they **sleep** (*Nishmat ha-Chayyim*, III:16, 52c–53b). The most famous example of this is Genesis 6:4. In rabbinic literature the signal case is **Samael:**

> [I]t says "the serpent was the most cunning of the wild beasts" (Gen 3:1). [The serpent] looked like a camel, and Samael mounted and rode it [i.e., possessed it] … [Then] the serpent had relations with Eve, and she conceived Cain … Because she realised [the serpent] was not an earthly creature but a heavenly being, she said "I have gained a man with God." (PdRE 17, 21)

Often the **demons** will appear in a familiar form, usually the husband (but sometimes not) in order to get the woman's cooperation (*She'lot u'Teshuvot* of Meir Lublin, #116). Demonic offspring can result, as well as **banim shovavim**, impish children or changelings. The most famous example in Jewish tradition involves **women** having intercourse with the **fallen angels**.



Bookplate by E. M. Lilien

Intercession: The request that a saint, an **Angel**, a dead meritorious ancestor, or other spiritual intermediary intervene with God on one's behalf.[1] It is widely held belief among Jews today that intercessors and intercessory **Prayers** are not a part of Judaism, but this is inaccurate. The Sages call attention to numerous times where the **Prophets** following **Moses** speak in defense of Israel. Some argue that no prophet is worthy of the name unless he is willing at some point to step in between God and Jewish people. As it turns out, keeping us out of trouble in more than a full time job. **Abraham**, **Rachel**, and other virtuous ancestors, we are told, are still occupied with this advocacy long after they've died (*LOTJ* 4:304–10).

Among angels we are told, in various sources, that **Michael** (Ex. R. 18:5), **Gabriel** (Sanh. 44b), and even an eponymously named angel, Israel (Mid. Teh. 8:6; PdRE 37), is our people's guardian spirit and advocate. Least known, however, is the **Ruach P'sak'nit**.

Hechalot Rabbati describes a class of angels who plead the Jewish people's case before God. In medieval Europe, there arose a custom of professional intercessors studying **Torah** on behalf of a pregnant woman as a means of prophylaxis. Intercessory prayer has been present in Judaism since late antiquity, but has become more accepted over the centuries, possibly because of exposure to Christian and Islamic saint veneration. **Chasidism**, for example, seeks the intercession of both living and dead *tzadikim*. *SEE* ANCESTORS; RIGHTEOUS, THE

1. Klein, *A Time to Be Born*, 37, 145–46.

Invisibility: The power to vanish is only occasionally mentioned in Jewish literature. Both **Isaac Luria** and the **Baal Shem Tov** reportedly could render themselves invisible (*Toldot ha-Ari; ShB* 180).

Ir El Giborim: A liturgical poem (*piyut*) by Amattai ben Shaphatiah recited on the holiday of Simchat Torah. It tells the story of **Moses's** miraculous **ascent** into the **seven heavens** to claim the **Torah**, based on a **Midrash** (PR 20).

Irin: *SEE* WATCHER

Iron: (ברזל/*Barzel*). Evil spirits are believed to have an aversion to **metal**, particularly silver and iron (T. Shab. 6:13). Exodus 7:19 reports that Egyptian vessels of "wood and stone" were ruined by the **plagues**, implying that iron implements were impervious to supernatural forces. Thus we read in one **Midrash** that a Sage summoned locals with iron tools to drive out a **demons** that had haunted a **well** (Lev. R. 24). Iron objects, such as **knives**, are also used in **rituals** to combat **fevers** (Shab. 67a). To this day, some Jews will carry a small iron object, such as a safety pin, to ward off malevolent spirits.[1] The supernatural power of iron is derived from its **Hebrew name**, *BaRZeL*, which is believed to be an acronym for the four **Matriarchs** of the twelve tribes: **B**ilhah, **Rachel**, **Z**ilpah, and **L**eah. Their merit imbues iron with its protective quality (*Kav ha-Yashar* 47; *Da'at Moshe*, Balak). *SEE* SWORD.

1. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 46, 49, 160.

Isaac: Isaac was the second son of **Abraham**, the only son by Abraham's beloved wife **Sarah**. He was the bearer of all God's promises to Abraham to make his descendants a mighty nation. Isaac himself was born of a **miracle** , being conceived decades after Sarah's menopause. Three angelic visitors, later identified as **Michael**, **Gabriel**, and **Raphael**, came to Abraham's camp and heralded Isaac's conception (Gen. 18). God later commanded Abraham to **sacrifice** Isaac, his beloved son, and only the intervention of an **Angel** prevented him from doing so (Gen. 22).

Rabbinic literature adds more miraculous details to Isaac's life. His birth triggered the **sun** and the **moon** to shine more intensely, a phenomenon not to be repeated again until the Messianic Era. Moreover, the blind regained their sight, the deaf could hear, and barren **women** became fertile. A general sense of well-being, unknown since **Eden**, swept the world (Tanh. Gen. 37; Gen. R. 3). Sarah's

breasts were filled with such bounty that she not only nursed **Isaac**, but all the children that attended his weaning party.

According to some Midrashim, God ordered the offering of Isaac in response to **Satan** taunting, much like the incident in Job. On the basis of the **Bible**'s own chronology, the Sages conclude Isaac was actually thirty-seven at the time of his binding, that Isaac submitted willingly to God's test, and that he actually underwent **Death** at the hands of Abraham, only to be resurrected afterward (Lam. R. petichta 24; PdRE 31; Tanh. Vayera 23; *Seder Olam*). During the period of his demise, his **soul** ascended to **heaven**, where he studied **Torah** (which had yet to be given to humanity) in the **yeshiva shel malah**, the heavenly academy (Gen. R. 56; *Sefer ha-Yashar* 43a–44b). Having done so, he returned to his **Body** with an extraordinary knowledge of its contents. When he was about to be sacrificed, the angels starting crying; some of those tears fell in Isaac's eyes, leading to his eventual blindness. Another version has the blindness result from Isaac looking directly at the divine **glory** (described in Gen. 28; Gen. R. 65:10; Deut. R. 11:3; PdRE 32).

When he finally did die, his body did not decay and was not consumed by worms. Like the others laid to rest in the Cave of Machpelah, his body was perfectly preserved (B.B. 17a–b).

In the system of **sefirot**, Isaac is the manifestation of **Gevurah**, of God's strict justice (*Toldot Adam,* House of Faith 1). His near sacrifice tempers them both, making it possible for him to sire **Jacob**, the balancing principle. The dimming of his eyes (Gen. 27:1) represents the muting of judgment in the world (*Sha'arei Orah* I:231).

Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen: Kabbalist (Spanish, ca. 13th century). He wrote several mystical treatises. His **Treatise on the Left Emanation** was a groundbreaking study of demonic metaphysics and paved the way for the **Zohar**.[1]

1. Dan and Kiener, *Early Kabbalah*.

Isaac ben Samuel of Acre: Kabbalist (Israel, ca. 13th–14th century). Isaac is most remembered for his travels and contacts with other notable mystics of his day. He wrote *Otzar Chayyim*, a spiritual diary of his experiences and practices, especially the use of **tzerufim**, word and letter combinations, as a meditative device.

Isaac ben Samuel of Dampierre: Talmudist (French, ca. 12th century). Rav Isaac approved of the summoning of spirits for purposes of **divination** and benevolent

magic. His disciples believed that he himself received his insights from angelic instruction.

Isaac, Testament of: **Apocryphal** work about the death of Isaac. On his deathbed, God grants him a revelation of the afterlife. It includes what may be the first reference to the *Nahar DeNur*, the **River of Light** that flows between **Eden** and **Gehenna**.

Isaac the Blind or Isaac the Pious: Isaac ben Abraham of Posquieres was a Kabbalist (French, ca. 12th–13th century). As the possible author of the **Bahir**, he can be regarded as the first of the classical Kabbalists. He was also the teacher of the first generation of great mystical writers of the Spanish/Provencal tradition. One tradition claims **Elijah** was his angelic teacher. He is the first to openly teach the concept of **reincarnation** in Judaism. Some of his writings also offer mystical insights on **colors** and **light**, suggesting that his blindness came later in life.

Isaiah: This **Prophet** of ancient Israel is credited with the longest prophetic book in the **Bible**, the eponymously named "Book of Isaiah." In it, the prophet-priest records a spectacular (and typically priestly) **vision** of God that appears to him in the **Temple** in which he sees YHVH seated on a throne in **glory**, attended by **serafim**. This revelation becomes the archetype for subsequent Jewish **Hechalot** literature.

In a famous sign from God given to King Ahaz of Judah, Isaiah predicts that a pregnant woman known to both men would bear a son (Isa. 7–8). In 2 Kings, Isaiah foretold that God would smite the Assyrian army of Sennacherib besieging **Jerusalem**, an event that unfolded as predicted shortly thereafter, relieving the city. Aside from these, there are no supernatural events associated with the life of Isaiah in the Bible. The **Talmud** repeats the legend from **apocalyptic literature** in which Isaiah attempts to flee persecution by invoking the **Tetragrammaton** and disappearing into the trunk of a **tree**, only to have it cut down by order of King Manasseh (Yev. 49b).

Iscah: Another name for **Sarah** (Meg. 14a; Sanh. 69b).

Ishbi-Benob: A biblical **giant** (2 Sam.) and one of the four brothers of **Goliath**. He was the equal of 70,000 ordinary Israelite warriors (*Mid. Tehillim* 18:30). According to the **Midrash**, he once captured **David** and devised an ingenious **Death** for him, but God miraculously delivered David in an action-packed, humorous supernatural duel (Sanh. 95b; Gen. R. 59).

Ishchak ben Yacub Ovadiah Abu Isa Al-Isfahani: Failed **Messiah** (Persian, ca. 7th century). He led a revolt against the early Islamic Caliphate (the Umayyads), a venture that ended in total defeat and the death of Abu Isa.

Ishim: (אישים). “Men.” A class of angels with bodies half of snow, half of fire (*Gedulat Moshe*).

Ishmael: The son of **Abraham** and **Hagar**, in the **Bible**, Ishmael’s life is saved by God, who sends an **Angel** to intervene when he and his mother were dying in the **wilderness**. In rabbinic literature, his vulnerability in the desert was the result of **Sarah** putting an **evil eye** upon him (Gen. R. 53:15). The **well** that the angel shows them is in fact the miraculous well God created on the sixth day of **Creation**, the same one known as the **well of Miriam** that would move with the Israelites during their forty years of wandering (Avot 5:6). In rabbinic rhetoric after the 7th century, Ishmael is often a figurative stand-in for Islam.

Like other personalities in the Bible, the **Kabbalah** renders Ishmael a symbolic exemplar of metaphysical forces, usually those of judgment, and held to be in an intermediate status of mixed good and **evil**, between the holiness of Israel and the evil of idolatrous **Esau** (i.e., **Christianity**) (118b), but also sometimes Ishmael is ascribed a more frankly infernal nature (Zohar I:110a; ZCh 47a). Interestingly, it seems to be the Islamic practice of **circumcision** that earns Ishmael the most merit in the Zoharic worldview (II:87a).

Ishmael ben Elisha ha-Kohen: Mishnaic Sage and mystic (ca. 2nd century). After his mother struggled many years to conceive, Ishmael was born because of the intervention of the angel **Gabriel** (another tradition claims it was **Metatron**) and at his birth he was recognized as one of the seven (or ten) most beautiful infants in the world. He was one of the **ten martyrs** killed by the Romans and the unjust killing of this righteous **soul** nearly caused the foundations of the **Earth** to crumble. Seeing his beauty, the daughter of Caesar asked that he be spared. Instead, Caesar ordered that his face be peeled from his head and presented to her. When his soul finally departed, Gabriel escorted him to his eternal reward (*Mid. Eleh Ezkarah*; BhM 2:64–65). The face of Rabbi Ishmael went on to become the source of miraculous healings. This may be the only example of a relic taken from the **Body** of a martyr in Jewish tradition.

Ishmael is regarded as a virtuoso in the methods of mystical **ascent** and the **Ma’asei merkavah**, having learned the proper techniques from Rabbi **Akiba** (*Ma’aseh Merkavah*). As such, he appears in a remarkable passage of the

Talmud (Ber. 7a) having a conversation with **Akatriel-YaH**. In this divine manifestation, Akatriel-YaH asks Ishmael to bless him. After such a report, it is not surprising that Ishmael is the central figure in a number of mystical texts, including **Ma'aseh Merkavah**, **Pirke Hechalot**, and **Sefer Raziel**. *SEE* DECREE, DIVINE; RIGHTEOUS, THE; YORED MERKAVAH.

Israel: (ישראל). "Yisrael." This term can refer to two esoteric concepts:

1. The people Israel: The name bestowed upon **Jacob** after he wrestled with a divine being. The name, along with its power, becomes the title of his descendants, the *B'nai Yisrael*, the "Children of Israel." The name can be translated as either "God wrestler," "Prince of God," or "Upright of God," but using **gematria**, the name *YiSRAeiL* can be read as *YeiSH* 231, "There are 231 [gates]," referring to the 231 power permutations of the **alphabet** described in **Sefer Yetzirah**. The name is also numerically equal to the phrase *sechel ha-poel*, "understanding the workings." This teaches that Israel has theurgic authority—both the capacity and the occult knowledge to use the alphabet for creative purposes, imitating what God did in creating the world, as well as commanding spirits (*Ginnat Egoz* 57b). The people Israel are God's "inheritance" and "portion" (see Deut. 30–34). While the celestial governance of other peoples is delegated to **Angels**, God rules over Israel directly. *SEE* ISRAEL, LAND OF; NATIONS.; RIGHTEOUS, THE.

2. An angel of the heavenly firmament. The name of Israel is inscribed on his forehead, and each day he greets the dawn singing God's praises, paralleling what the people Israel do on earth (*Pirke Hechalot*). He is sometimes represented as **Jacob**'s **guardian angel**, and the angel who wrestled him by the river Yabbok (PdRE 35). This angel elsewhere thought to be the transubstantiated **Patriarch** Jacob, who is identified in several texts as a quasi-divine being (Mid. Teh. 8:6; PdRE 36, 37).

Israel ben Eliezer (the Baal Shem Tov or BeSHT): Mystic and founder of the Chasidic movement (Ukrainian, ca. 18th century). He became known as the Baal Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name) or the BeSHT, by his disciples. Many legends, **healings**, and **miracles** are attributed to him, including curing barrenness, combating werewolves and **demons**, shifting **mountains**, and others too numerous to mention. He was a clairvoyant and an **amulet** maker, a practice associated with **Chasidism** to this day. The power of his amulets, interestingly enough, derived not from the use of God's name, but from his own name in their

construction (*Shemot ha-Tzadikim*). He wrote little himself except for some letters, and almost everything we know of his teachings were written down by his followers in collections like **Shivhei ha-BeSHT** (*ShB*), which overflow with stories of the paranormal and fabulous. The one collection of letters that is widely credited to him does include his description of experiencing a **Ma'asei merkavah**-like mystical **ascent**.[1]

1. Rabinowicz, *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, 234–38. Also see Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*, 182–91.

Israel, Land of: (ארץ ישראל/*Eretz Yisrael*, also *Eretz ha-Kodesh; ha-Aretz*). The Land of Israel is holy. It is God's own **Earth**, just as the people **Israel** are God's own special allotment, and people may dwell there as tenants only so long as their righteousness merits their presence. Eventually the land vomits out the wicked. The Canaanites lost their right to the land for this very reason (Gen. 12), and though the land has been promised to the Children of Israel in perpetuity, actual occupation of the land is still contingent on the people's moral condition. Living on the land grants a kind of grace to the inhabitant, that assures his or her place in the **World to Come** (*Toldot Adam*, House of Wisdom II). The **Earth** of Israel is full of spiritual power, atonement, and forgiveness. Therefore the **fate** of Jews who die in the diaspora was of great concern:

> Why did the Patriarchs so dearly love burial in the land of Israel? … For the dead of Israel live first in Messianic days and eat during the days of the Messiah … Therefore Jacob said, "do not bury me in Egypt" … [For the rest] what does the Holy Blessed One do? He makes tunnels in the earth and they roll until they reach the land of Israel. When they have reached the land of Israel, the Holy One, Blessed be, He puts in them a spirit of life and they arise, for it was stated, "And I will bring you up from your graves, my nation, and I will bring you to the land of Israel" (Ezek. 37:12) and afterwards "and I will put my spirit among you and you will live." (*Tanchuma*, Va-yehi 3)

Many believe that to be buried with a bag of earth from Israel will ensure that a Jew, wherever he or she may be buried in the world, will be resurrected on the **Day of Judgment** to forgiveness and vindication. According to Kabbalist **Abraham Azulai**, there is an umbilicus connecting **heaven** and Israel that bypasses all the **four worlds**. The land is, in effect, the gateway between heaven and earth (*Chesed L'Avraham*). The **Righteous** that die in exile undergo **gilgul** ("rolling"); they journey via underground causeways to the Land of Israel, where they will experience immediate **resurrection**.

Iyyun Circle: A mystical school of southern France (ca. 13th century). The group produced some thirty texts, though most of them still exist only in manuscript form. **Sefer ha-Iyyun** is the most well known and most studied of these.

Iyyun, Sefer ha-: "The Book of Speculation/Contemplation." A text of mystical theosophy. It builds much of its teaching around the version of the **Tetragrammaton** that appears in the theophany at the **burning bush** (Ex. 3), eHYeH, "I will be." There are a few printed versions and many manuscript versions of this work, all marked by significant variations in content.

[contents]

J



Jachin and Boaz: (יכין ובעז). Two bronze **pillars** on the exterior of **Solomon's Temple**. Along with the other pillar, Boaz, it was erected before the door to the sanctuary:

> And he [Solomon] erected the pillars for the portico of the sanctuary, and he erected the right-hand pillar and called it "Yachin," and he erected the left-hand pillar and called it "Boaz." (1 Kings 7:21)

The significance of the two named pillars on the portico of the Temple is never explained in the Hebrew **Bible**, and remains the Sod ha-Sodot, the mystery of mysteries, connected to the great structure.

These two bronze pillars, topped with curved capitals and festooned with a decorative motif of *rimmonim* (pomegranates) and *shushan* (lily?), are a genuine puzzle. The complex instructions concerning the capitals, in particular, using terms that appear nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible, introduce considerable uncertainty as to the final appearance of the pillars. Moreover, it seems that the pillars served no structural function, making them, as we would say today, "architectural features," purely decorative objects. The fact that they are each named adds to the confusion, as the significance of the names ("foundation" and "strong") is not self-evident. The obvious conclusion is that these were symbolic in nature. But the exact meaning of the symbolism has eluded most commentators.

One solution is that they are a vestigial element from Pagan temple design. There is evidence that Canaanite and Phoenician temples had exterior pillars. The lily motif is one seen on other pillars in ancient **Egypt** and Mesopotamia. Overlapping this is the idea that they are representation of the divine **phallus**, symbols of power, vitality, and **fertility**, though the presence of two structures confuses the issue.

Scholar Jon Levenson argues the Temple is meant to be a **microcosm** of the world at its Edenic, pristine phase, a "model," as it were, of the creation process ("The Temple and the World" 297). One can see this idea more explicitly acknowledged in Ezekiel 47, where the messianic temple resembles **Eden**, complete with four rivers flowing from its precincts. The Temple exemplifies the world at its primordial origin, the ideal cosmos. Therefore, just as the the Molten Sea basin in the courtyard symbolizes the constrained primeval waters, the pillars would be something paired within the paired process of forming the universe (notice in the Genesis 1 account, the world is formed out of paired merisms—light and dark, water above and below, land and sea, etc.). Thus they are either the [implied] pillars that hold up the **heavens**, the cherubs who guarded Eden (Gen. 3), or the two **trees** that sat at the center of the garden, the **Tree of Life** and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Yet the correspondence between the Genesis narrative and the Temple pillars is not absolute. If they symbolizes cherubs, why pillars at all, especially when cherubs decorate the interior of the building? and if they invoke the trees, why not more centrally located in the structure? And Genesis does not explicitly mention pillars as a feature of creation. Still, the Genesis account of the creation is not the only one found in the Hebrew Bible (Pss. 74, 104; Job 38–40), each of

which offer several similar, but hardly identical, descriptions. Ancient **myths** tend to have multiple, variant iterations.

The traditional commentaries offer several explanations for the names. Perhaps this most plausible is this one by David Kimchi:

> He named the pillars to make a good omen. They were at the entrance to the Temple, and he called them by names to make a good omen. He called one "Yachin," meaning "establishment," that the Temple should be established forever, like the phrase, "Like the moon, it should be established forever." "Boaz," meaning "strength," a contraction of "Bo Oz" ["strength within"], meaning that God would put strength and endurance, in it, as it is written, "Adonai will give strength to His people." (Comment to 1 Kings 7:21)

Jacob (also Israel): Biblical **Patriarch**, the son of **Isaac**. He was father to twelve sons who would be the founding fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. In the **Bible**, Jacob experiences two major supernatural events, his dream vision of the ladder between **heaven** and **Earth** (Gen. 28) and his mysterious nighttime wrestling match with a man/angel by the river Yabbok (Gen. 32), at which time he is renamed "Israel" ("one who wrestles with God").

In rabbinic legend, there are even more supernatural dimensions to Jacob's life. Given the biblical account, it is not surprising that most of them revolve around **Angels**. When Jacob stole the birthright by deceiving his blind father Isaac, Isaac tried to curse him, but angels prevented this. At this time, Jacob purloined the garments of Adam which were then in Esau's possession. When he wore them, they emitted the scent of **Eden** (PdRE 32; Zohar I:142b).



Jacob and Rachel by E. M. Lilien

When Jacob had his dream-vision of the heavenly ladder, he also received apocalyptic revelations. In one version, he actually ascended to the top of the ladder and from there caught a glimpse of the celestial temple (Gen. R. 56:10, 79:7; Sif. D. 352; PdRK 21:5; Tanh. Ve-Yetzei).

When Jacob wrestled with the angel, it was Esau's guardian angel he battled (Gen. R. 77:2; Tanh. Va-yishlach). Another tradition claims it was his own guardian angel, **Israel** (PdRE 36). Angels also served as Jacob's messenger to his brother Esau at the time of their reconciliation. Esau was so intimidated by this manifestation of the heavenly host that he immediately abandoned his plans to kill his brother. Later in life, Jacob's arrival in **Egypt** brought an end to the famine his son **Joseph** had been battling. He died by the **kiss** of God.

The **Zohar**, building upon a tradition that Jacob resembled **Adam** (B.B. 58a), goes further in suggesting that Jacob took on all the most beautiful of Adam's features—and perhaps he was even a **reincarnation** of the first **soul** (Zohar I:142b).

In early Jewish **mysticism**, Jacob is considered the most perfect of the Patriarchs, almost angelic (Ps. 134:5; Gen. R. 76:1; PdRE 35; Mid. Teh. 8:6). For that reason, his image is inscribed on the **Throne of Glory**, a fact alluded to in the Bible: "And upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness of a man" (Ez. 1:26). **Midrash** ascribes to him divine status in God's eyes (Meg. 18a). All this, plus the fact that there is an angel with his name (Israel), suggests there may be a now-forgotten tradition of Jacob undergoing angelification (Gen. R. 74:17; Tos. Sot. 10:9; B.B. 17a).

The Zohar regards him to be the personification of Tiferet, the balancing force between the **Chesed** of Abraham and the Gevurah of Isaac (Zohar I:138a; Zohar II:259a; ZCh 57a).

Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen: Kabbalist (Spanish, ca. 13th century). Along with his brother, Isaac ben Jacob, he is the author of a popular mystical tract on the power of the **Hebrew alphabet**. *SEE* KABBALAH.

Jacob Isaac the Seer of Lublin: Chasidic master and wonderworker (Polish, ca. 18th–19th century). A celebrated figure in his own lifetime, he possessed the power to predict the future. He could also recount the past incarnations of the souls of the people he met. Because of these divinatory feats he was called the "**Urim and Thummim**." Unfortunately, his powers escaped him at a critical moment, for he believed the Napoleonic Wars signaled the **End of Days**. *SEE* CHASIDISM; PHYSIOGNOMY.; RIGHTEOUS, THE.

Jacob of Marvege: Mystical diarist (Rhenish, ca. 13th century) who collected legal and spiritual answers about Jewish practice from the **Angels** by means of **incubation** and published them in a text, She'lot u-teshuvot min ha-shamayim ("Questions and Answers from **heaven**"). These legal opinions were widely accepted, despite their paranormal origins. *SEE* DREAM.

Jashar, Book of: (*Sefer ha-Yashar*). "Book of the Upright." A lost book of ancient Israel quoted only briefly a few times in Scripture, virtually nothing is known about its dimensions, content, or authorship. Based on the few quotes excerpted, the only useful thing that can be said is that it was probably poetic in genre. Based solely on its title, some Sages claim that it is the book of Genesis, but none of the quotes taken from the Book of Jashar appear anywhere in Genesis. There is a medieval mystical text by Abraham Abulafia and an early modern midrashic book by the same name.

Jehovah: Christian scribal misinterpretation produced this name for God from YHVH. The name has no religious significance to Jews. *SEE* EXPLICIT NAME OF GOD; TETRAGRAMMATON.

Jekon: One of the leaders of the **fallen angel** (I Enoch, 69:4–5).

Jephthah: A biblical Judge/Chieftain appearing in the book of Judges. As punishment for following through on his foolish vow to immolate his daughter (Judg. 11), God cursed Jephthah that his flesh should fall away bit by bit, so that no one spot would be his final **burial** place (Gen. R. 60:3).

Jerahmiel: (ירחמאל). "May God be Compassionate." A destructive **Angel** who rules one of the compartments of **Gehenna** (MhG). In II Esdras, he is an **archangel**.

Jeremiah: The biblical accounts of the **Prophet** Jeremiah are effectively bereft of supernatural elements. The Rabbis have little else to report in this regard, other than a legend that the prophet was born circumcised (AdRN 2). He is satirized in Alef Beit Ben Sira as accidentally siring his own grandson. According to a medieval legend, he created a **golem** using Sefer Yetzirah (*Sefer Gematriot*).

Jerusalem: (ירושלים/*Yerushalyim*, also *Ir David; Ir ha-Kodesh*). The city, originally a Jesubite stronghold, became **David's** capital around 1000 BCE. He modestly renamed it the City of David, but its ancient name continues to overshadow all subsequent names given by it conquerors, including *Aelia*

Capitolina by the Romans and *Al Quds* by the Arabs. Often it is simply referred to as “the Holy City.” It is the holiest of the four holy cities of Israel (Hebron, Tiberius, and Safed being the others).

The creation of the world began at the point where Jerusalem now stands. Before the fall, **Adam Kadmon** made his offerings before God on a hilltop where one day the city and **Temple** would be built (Gen. R. 8:20). It is first mentioned in the book of Genesis as “Salem,” when the mysterious **priest** of the city, Melchizedek, visits **Abraham** (chapter 14). The **Temple** of YHVH is built there on Mount Zion by **Solomon**. The city has been destroyed twice, once by the Babylonians and once by the Romans, and conquered many times by different empires. Whenever it has been permitted by its rulers, Jews have lived in the city.

It is the location of many **miracle** s and regarded to be the nexus point between the material and all spiritual planes. There is a celestial Jerusalem (*Yerushalyim shel Malah*) that is the ideal counterpart of the earthly Jerusalem (*Yerushalyim shel Mattah*) (Tanh. Pekudei 1). In the celestial Jerusalem, the temple there continues to offer **sacrifices** to God, overseen by the angelic High Priest, **Michael** (Tan. 5a; Zohar III:15b, 68b, 147b). The earthly Jerusalem is also the center of the world (Tanh. Kedoshim 10).

Biblical Jerusalem was the epicenter of many fabulous phenomena. The entire city smelled like cinnamon (Shab. 63a). During the time the Temple stood, no woman ever miscarried, no one ever experienced demonic attack, there were never any accidents, the buildings never collapsed, the city was fireproof, no one was homeless, and no one was parsimonious (AdRN 35). As the “gate of **heaven**” (Gen. 28), all varieties of good and blessing flowed down from heaven through the city to benefit the world (Lev. R. 24:4). The Temple compound, as befits its unique metaphysical status, at times defied the laws of physics by providing infinite space for worshippers (Avot 5).

In the **World to Come**, the celestial Jerusalem will descend to **Earth** and the city will spread out in every direction to encompass all the returning exiles (Zech. 2–12; Ber. 49a; B.B. 75b, *Sifrei* 1). Messianic Jerusalem will be of astronomical proportions and unsurpassed splendor, encompassing thousands of gardens, pools, towers, and citadels, and only the righteous will be permitted entry. The gates and building will be made of precious **gemstones**, its walls of precious **metals**, and its glow will be visible to the ends of the earth (Isa. 54:12; Mid. Teh. 87:2; B.B. 75b; PdRK 299; BhM 3:74–75). Its towers will rise so high

that it will merge with heaven (BhM 3:67; PdRK 466). God's **glory** will reside there and experiencing it will become commonplace (Zech. 2).

A great tent will be made from the skin of **Leviathan** and all will gather under it to feast on its meat in a messianic banquet. The hidden vessels of the Second Temple will be recovered, the Temple will function again, and the waters of the **abyss**, now tamed, will issue forth from under the messianic Temple, growing into mighty streams that will freshen the waters of both the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean (Yoma 77b–78a; Zech. 14; Ezek. 47:1–12). **clouds** will convey the pilgrims of all **nations** to Jerusalem on a regular basis, where they will worship at the Temple in universal harmony.

Jesus: Itinerant Galilean holy man and, from a Jewish perspective, failed **Messiah** (ca. 1st century). In the Gospel accounts, Jesus is a miraculous figure, born of a mortal woman and the **Holy Spirit**. He has the power to heal, cast out **demons**, multiply foodstuffs, walk on water, and perform many other **miracles**. Christian dogma declares him the "only begotten son of God" and "God incarnate," claims that Jews reject.

The Rabbis rarely mention Jesus or Christians in the centuries following his death. From the few unambiguous comments about him found in **Talmud** and **Midrash**, it is clear they knew very little about Jesus, and what little they did know came mostly from Christian sources. Often what appear in rabbinic literature are convoluted tidbits from the Gospel accounts. Thus a figure called Ben Stada—who may or may not be Jesus—gained magical skills as a result of spending his youth in **Egypt** (Shab. 104b). Whether or not the Shabbat passage is actually referring to Jesus, elsewhere it is clear some Rabbis believed Jesus was really a magician (Sanh. 104b). The medieval polemical tract Toldot Yeshu claimed that Jesus obtained his magical and miraculous powers by stealing the knowledge of the **Tetragrammaton** from inside the **Temple**. He wrote the **name of God** on parchment and inserted it into an incision (or a tattoo) in his skin. Jesus then used the power of God's name to fly and to perform miraculous **healings**.

Jews were also highly skeptical of the Christian claim of his **resurrection** and ascension. Rather than ascending bodily into **heaven** as the Gospels claim, *Toldot Yeshu* asserts his **Body** was stolen by a gardener who used it for his own purposes. References to this "body theft" story also appear in Pagan and Christian apologetic literature about Jesus. Most of the more colorful Jewish legends appear in *Toldot Yeshu*.[1]

The **Zohar** is implacably, albeit cryptically, hostile to the figure of Jesus, and assigns him a variety of roles of impurity and **evil** in its metaphysics, most especially linking him with the demon **Samael** (I:146a; II:11a; 111a; III:124a).

1. Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 10, 10–14; vol. 15, 1208.

Jethro: The father-in-law of **Moses**. According to **Midrash**, for a time Jethro served as a sorcerer in the **palace** of **Pharaoh**. He saw **Joseph** use the **rod** of power the **Patriarchs** had inherited from **Adam**, so when Joseph died he took it and planted it in the garden of his home in Midian. There it remained, unmovable, until Moses appeared and drew the rod out of the earth. When he saw this, Jethro knew Moses was the man destined to deliver **Israel**, and he gave his daughter **Zipporah** to him in **marriage** (PdRE 40). In **Zohar**, his conversion to faith in the One God rectifies the **sin** of his **ancestor**, **Cain** (I: 28b; II: 67b).

Jewelry: *SEE* CROWN; EARS AND EARRING; GEMSTONES; RING; TZOHAR.

Jezebel: Queen of Israel through **marriage** to King Ahab. The **Bible** taught that she was a witch who used her powers to lead Ahab astray (2 Kings 9). She is one of “four **women** who ruled the world” (Es. R. 3:2).

Job: The Rabbis call him one of the “seven gentile **Prophets**.” In the pseudepigraphic Testament of Job, Job fights a protracted face-to-face contest with **Satan**. At the end of his life, Job gives his daughters miraculous belts that grant them power over **Angels**.

Jochnes and Mamres (alternately, Jannes and Mambres): The chief magicians of **Pharaoh** who battled **Moses** in **Egypt** (Ex. 7–8). They foresaw the coming of Moses by means of **divination** and so instructed Pharaoh to kill the Israelite firstborn sons. As the two sons of Balaam, they were true **witches**; they could fly and make themselves invisible (Gen. R. 86.15; Kid. 49b). Later they joined the Israelites in the **Exodus** as agent provocateurs and they were that “mixed multitude” that incited the people to construct the **golden calf** (Zohar II:191a–2: 191b). They also assisted Balaam in his efforts to curse **Israel**. Eventually they were slain using the power of the divine name (Men. 85a; Tanh. Ki Tissa 19; Yalkut Ex. 168). They derived their power from the Sefirah of Gevurah (Zohar I:83a, 249a–b; Zohar II:28a).

Joel: (יואל). An **Angel** mentioned in the Testament of Solomon.

Jonathan, Rabbi: *SEE* YOCHANAN.

Jonathan Shada: A **demon** mentioned in the **Talmud** (Yev. 22a).

Joseph: **Patriarch** and son of **Jacob**. Joseph was a celebrated oneiromancer, with a special God-given capacity to interpret **dreams**. On three occasions he demonstrates this talent in the **Bible** (Gen. 37, 39, 41). He was also a diviner, engaging in the practice of hydromancy by use of a **ritual** cup. This cup becomes the occasion for one episode in the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers (Gen. 43–44).

According to the **Midrash**, the pit his brothers cast him into was populated by poisonous snakes and scorpions, but like **Daniel**, he was miraculously protected (Shab. 22a; Gen. R. 84:16). Later, **Gabriel** taught Joseph all the world's languages while he languished in prison. After his death, the Egyptians had his **Body** sealed in a **metal** coffin and sunk in the Nile in order that his bones would bless the river (MdRI BaShallach; Ex. R. 20:17).With the help of Serach bat Asher, **Moses** was able to raise the coffin from the deep in order to fulfill the promise made to Joseph, on his death bed, that his bones would be buried at Machpelah (Sot. 13a–b; MdRI BeShallach; PdRK 11:12). Probably the most enduring legend about Joseph is that the descendants of Joseph are immune to the **evil eye**:

> R. Yochanan [who was surpassingly handsome, like his ancestor Joseph] used to go and sit at the gates of the mikvah. When the daughters of Israel ascend from the bath, said he, "Let them look on me, that they may bear sons as beautiful and as learned as I." Said the Rabbis to him: "Do you not fear an evil eye?" "I am of the seed of Joseph," he replied, "against whom an evil eye is powerless." For it is written, Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a (*Alay ayin*) fountain, (Gen. 49:22) about which R. Abbahu observed: Read not "*alay ayin* [by a fountain]" but "*oleh ayin* [transcends the eye]." R. Jose b. Hanina said: [It is derived] from this passage, And let them grow [*ve-yidgu*] like fish in the midst of the earth, into a teeming multitude in the midst of the earth [Gen. 48:16; Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Menasheh, the two sons of Joseph]; Just as fish in the seas are covered by water and the eye has no power over them, so also are the seed of Joseph: the eye has no power over them. (Ber. 20a)

Joseph ben Ephraim Caro: *SEE* CARO, JOSEPH; MAGGID.

Joshua: The successor of **Moses** as leader of the Israelites, Joshua meets an **Angel** outside of Jericho, the commander (**Sar**) of the **host of heaven**, which

later tradition identified with **Michael** (Josh. 5:13). He commanded the **sun** to stand still for thirty-six hours (Yalkut Lech Lecha). Joshua eventually married Rehab, and the **Prophets Jeremiah** and **Huldah** were their descendants (Num. R. 8; MdRI Yitro).

Joshua ben Levi: Talmudic Sage (ca. 3rd century). In addition to being a prodigy in Jewish **law**, Ben Levi was also one of the most colorful adepts of esoteric knowledge in rabbinic literature. He was a confidant of the angelic **Elijah**. Elijah was Joshua's **maggid**, or spirit guide (Sanh. 98a). Joshua accompanied Elijah on some of his earthly missions (Mak. 11a; Gen. R. 35:2; BhM 2).

Rabbi Joshua is most famous for having toured the seven levels of **Gehenna** and the **seven heavens**. There are multiple versions of his **visions** in both rabbinic and medieval texts. In one case, it is told that he first tricked the **Angel of Death** into giving up its sword before Joshua jumped over the wall to **Eden**:

> When he (ben Levi) was about to die, the Angel of Death was instructed, "Go carry out his wish." [The origins of the Make a Wish Foundation?] When he (the Angel) showed himself to him, [ben Levi] said, "Show me my place [in paradise]." "Very well," he replied. [ben Levi] Said "And give me your sword, or you may frighten me on the way." He gave it to him. On arrival, he lifted him up [over the wall] and showed him [paradise]. [ben Levi] Jumped and dropped on the other side. The Angel grabbed him by the cloak, but he exclaimed, "I swear I will not go back!" …"Return my sword!" He [the Angel] said, but he would not. A Bat Kol [a heavenly echo] finally went forth and said to him, "Return the thing to him, for it is required for mortals" [and he returned it]. (Ket. 77b)

In one of the alternate versions of this tale, he returned the weapon only after extracting a promise from the Angel that it would henceforth no longer display the fearful weapon to his victims (Ber. 51a; Eruv. 19a; BhM 2, 5).

Joshua had the power to make it **rain** (J. Tan. 3:4). He also practiced oneiromancy and taught methods for interpreting and averting ill **omens** that appear in **dreams** (Ber. 56b). He provided sage advice on how to avoid attracting the Angel of Death (do not take a shirt directly from someone's **hand** in the morning, do not allow someone who has not washed their hands to wash yours, and don't stand close to a woman who has just returned from caring for a corpse) (Ber. 51a). He also understood how to interpret omens Berachot 7a.

His son Joseph also had the power to see visions (Pes. 50a; B.B. 10b).

Joshua ben Perachia: Early Sage (ca. 1st century BCE– 1st century CE). He was one of the *zugot*, the scholars who formed the leadership of the Jewish community in the third through first centuries BCE. He is credited as being a teacher of **Jesus** while he lived in **exile** in **Egypt** (Sanh. 107b). Evidently, there is a legend (this writer cannot identify the source) that Joshua once used a get to exorcise a **succubus** . For this reason, his name will sometimes be invoked in the text of **amulets** and **incantation bowls** that likewise use the language of divorce to exorcise **Liliths** and female **demons**, as seen in this example:

> This day above any day, and generations of the world, I Komesh bat Machlaphta have divorced, separated, dismissed thee, O Lilith, Lilith of the desert, hag and ghul … I have fenced you out by the ban which Joshua ben Perachia sent against you. [1]

1. R. Patai, "Exorcism and Xenoglossia among the Safed Mystics," *The Journal of American Folklore* 91, no. 361 (1978): 225; Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 17, 159–61.

Joy and Humor: "Serve God in Joy" (Ps. 100:3). Judaism emphasizes that joy and laughter are spiritual tools that draw one close to God (Avot 4:1; Shab. 30b; *Ben Porat Yosef* 49a). Humor, **music**, and **dance** are, in fact, forms of worship. **Chasidism** in particular teaches the need to make joy central to worship, and offers techniques for cultivating joyfulness on a daily basis. Sadness is a kind of *Satan*, a spiritual obstacle to be overcome daily (Zohar I:180b).

Despite the assumptions of dour puritans of all faiths, both the **Bible** and rabbinic literature brim with humor: puns, wordplays, joke names, and even episodes of *Schadenfreude*. The entire biblical Book of **Esther** is written in the style of a farce about a very serious subject, anti-Semitism, and through the celebration of Purim, Jewish tradition treats it as an elaborate parody.

Two jesters are mentioned in the **Talmud** as spiritual agents of God (Tan. 22a). The **Baal Shem Tov** particularly praised the work of clowns in opening people's hearts to God. Chasidic masters employed witty stories, jokes, and even outright pranks in order to instruct their disciples, a custom still markedly evident in rabbinic sermons to this day.

Jubilees, Book of: This retelling of the events of Genesis is a Sefer Chitzon, a book "outside" the biblical canon. It features the story of the **fallen angel**, the **giants**, and a sectarian **solar calendar**. Multiple copies of it were found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, and the **priests** of Qumran may well have been the advocates, or even the authors, of the Jubilees ideology.

Judah: **Patriarch** and son of **Jacob**, progenitor of the tribe of Judah and therefore of most Jews. His voice was so powerful it could be heard in neighboring countries. He was reported to have fantastic strength, superior to **Samson**. He could grind an **iron** bar to dust with his teeth, and become so angry the **hair** over his heart would burst out, tearing his garment (Gen. R. 91–93:7). The "Angel of Desire" drove him to have **sex** with Tamar (Gen. R. 85). He completed the restoration, begun by his grandfather Abraham, of the presence of the **Shekhinah** in the world. The Shekhinah granted him eternal kingship in return (Zohar III:237b).

Judah ben Samuel he-Chasid or Judah the Pious: Founding figure of the **German Pietist** movement and **wunder-rabbi** (German, ca. 12th–13th century). His birth was miraculously portended, and his future greatness was revealed through a **divination** ritual by his father. He himself could foretell the future of individuals. He could use the **name of God** to constructive ends, from **healing** the sick to capturing criminals and curbing dangerous bishops. A number of his **segulot** have been preserved. He could teleport via a **cloud**. He believed that one could learn new insights into the **Torah** and its interpretations by consulting **Angels**, adjuring **demons**, and using the theurgic power of certain Jewish **Prayers**, especially the sh'ma (*Or Zarua*, Eruv. 147; *Meirat Einayim*). In at least one account, he conjured a dead spirit (*Ma'aseh Buch; Sefer ha-Gan*). When he became convinced by divination that a woman's barrenness was a lifelong condition, he had the woman undergo a simulated **burial** and **resurrection** in order to cure her. His major works were *Sefer ha-Kavod* (which has not survived intact), Sefer Chasidim, and *Sod ha-Yichud*.

Judah Loew ben Bezalel (the Maharal): Rabbi, polymath, and mystic (Czech, ca. 16th century). A great communal leader of the Jews of Prague, Rabbi Judah is most famous for the story of the **golem** he created to protect the community against anti-Semitic violence (*Miflaot Maharal*).

Judgment: ([illegible]/*Mishpat;* qdx/*Tzedek*). God is the source and guarantor of justice (Ps. 82). In Genesis, chapter 18, Abraham asks the rhetorical question, "Will not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" Since, as the book of Job highlights, there is in fact no assurance of justice being meted out in this world, Judaism teaches God's ultimate judgment awaits us in the **World to Come**. In the rabbinic understanding, post-mortem judgment comes in three phases: chibbut ha-kever, **Gehenna**, and *Yom ha-Din* (the torments of the grave, hell,

and **Judgment Day**). The process each **soul** faces is based on the moral condition of the person; whether he or she is counted among the righteous, the wicked, or the Beinonim, the "in-betweens" whose life is a mix of **sin** and merit. Kabbalists divide the afterlife into seven periods of judgment (Zohar III:127a).

Dying itself is seen as a kind of atonement for one's sins (M. Sanh. 6:2) and the terror of encountering the **Angel of Death** begins it all. This is the start of the chibbut ha-kever, and the subsequent separation of the soul from the **Body** is overseen by various angels of judgment, especially **Domah**, the angel of the grave. The newly deceased souls, lingering at the grave, must review their earthly deeds and experience the disintegration of their earthly remains (Lev. R. 4; Sanh. 47b; Tan. 11a; Mid. Teh. 11:6; Chag. 5a). The righteous, by contrast, are spared both the pain of death and the confrontation with the grimmest angels (PR 44:8). Those who gave **charity** in **secret** or were diligent in their **Torah study** will also be spared the worst of this first phase (PR 2; Ket. 104a).

The second, intermediate phase of the rabbinic scheme involves the placement of the soul pending the final Day of Judgment. The souls of the righteous, as well as those who underwent enormous suffering while still in their bodies (Eruv. 41b), go directly to Gan Eden or the Treasury of Souls beneath the **Throne of Glory**. The wicked and the *Beinonim* descend into **Gehenna**, where they are assigned to different compartments. For the *Beinonim* (that is, the bulk of humanity), Gehenna is a kind of purgatory, purifying their souls of the accreted sins of their lifetime. The process lasts a maximum of twelve months, after which the souls are transferred to Gan Eden to await the Day of Judgment (Shab. 33b; R.H. 17a; Ex. R. 7:4). For the wholly wicked, Gehenna is where they will remain until the End of Days. Some Sages in the **Talmud** try to identify those who will meet such an awful judgment. They include those who utterly deride the teachings of God and who combine adultery with publicly shaming and slandering their neighbors as those they think deserve the **fate** of "going down into Gehenna and not coming up." (B.M. 58b). Others add the entire generation of **the Flood** (M. Sanh. 10:3).

Third, at the Final Judgment at the **End of Days**, all souls undergo **resurrection** and must stand before God, the Judge of Judges (Sanh. 91a). Most souls, even those who were burdened with so many sins that they had to be summoned directly from Gehenna, will then know the final reward of the World to Come. Only the utterly and completely wicked will be annihilated and blotted out completely from under **heaven** and from all **memory** (B.B. 11a; Ber. 18b;

Shab. 152b–156b). *SEE* DEATH; ETERNAL LIFE; JUDGMENT, DAY OF; WORLD TO COME.

Judgment, Day of: (יום הדין/*Yom ha-Din; Yom Adonai; Yom ha-Hu; Ait ha-Hee*). A term often applied to the annual observance of Rosh Hashanah, when God judges Creation (even the **Angels** are judged—Isa. 24:21; High Holiday *Machzor)* or to the later tradition that there are actually four days of judgment each year: Rosh Hashanah, **Sukkot**, **Passover**, and Shavuot (PdRK 7:2).

"Judgment Day" is also used to refer to the **eschatological** moment at the end of time when the sleeping dead are resurrected to give a final account for their deeds in life. Many versions of this day appear in Jewish writings, starting with the biblical book of Daniel (chapter 7). Some describe it as a day of darkness and wrath when all the **nations** will be judged (Am. 5, 8; Isa. 1–3). It will be marked by earthquakes and consuming fires. Those who go through it will be purified, like silver in a crucible (Zech. 14). Even as individuals are called to moral account, the nations will also be judged. The nation of **Israel** will be vindicated, and its suffering at the hands of other nations redressed. The righteous among the nations will be accounted to Israel, and will ascend God's sacred **mountain** to form the messianic Kingdom of God. Some traditions link the day to the coming of the **Messiah**, though others distinguish the two events from each other to varying degrees (R.H. 16b–17b). *SEE* BEINONIM; EDEN, GARDEN OF; ESCHATOLOGY; ETERNAL LIFE; GEHENNA.; JUDGMENT

[contents]

K



Kabbalah: (קַבָּלָה). "[Esoteric] Tradition." "Kabbalah" (sometimes translated as "**mysticism**" or "occult knowledge") is a part of Jewish tradition that is preoccupied with "inner" meaning. Whether it entails a text, an experience, or the way things work, Kabbalists believe that the world does not wear its heart on its sleeve, that God truly moves in mysterious ways. But true knowledge and understanding of that inner, mysterious process is obtainable, and through that knowledge, the greatest intimacy with God is attainable.

Technically, the term "Kabbalah" only applies to the form of Jewish occult gnosis that emerged in medieval Spain and Provence from the 12th century on. Jews outside the circle of academia, however, use the term "Kabbalah" as a catchall for Jewish esotericism in all its forms.

The distinctive perspective that Kabbalists bring to their intellectual enterprise, the one that makes it “mysticism,” which is the desire to experience intimacy with God, is the tendency to see the Creator and the Creation as on a continuum, rather than as discrete entities. This is especially true with regards to the powerful mystical sense of kinship between God and humanity. Within the soul of every individual is a hidden part of God that is waiting to be revealed. And even mystics who refuse to so boldly describe such a fusion of God and man nevertheless find the whole of Creation suffused in divinity, breaking down distinctions between God and the universe. Thus, the Kabbalist Moses Cordovero writes, “The essence of divinity is found in every single thing, nothing but It exists … It exists in each existent.”

There are three dimensions to almost all forms of Jewish esotericism: the investigative, the experiential, and the practical. The first dimension, that of investigative Kabbalah, involves the quest for gnosis, or special knowledge: plumbing the hidden reality of the universe (the nature of the **Godhead**), understanding the cosmogony (origins), and cosmology (organization) of the universe, and apprehending the divine economy of spiritual forces in the cosmos. This is, technically speaking, an esoteric discipline more than it is a mystical one, which is to say, its more about acquiring **secret** knowledge than it is experiencing God directly.

So how does the speculative Kabbalist come by his special insight into the inner workings of God and world? There are fundamentally three ways in which esoteric knowledge is obtained in Jewish tradition:[1]

1. Through textual interpretation which uncovers *nistar*, or “hidden” meaning
2. Through the traditions transmitted orally by a Kabbalistic master
3. By means of some sort of direct revelation. Examples of this include visitation by an angel, or Elijah, by spirit possession, or other supra-rational experience.

Although it is primarily interested in metaphysics, things “beyond” the physical universe, it would be a grave mistake to say that investigative Kabbalah is anti-rational. All Jewish mystical/esoteric traditions adopt the language of, and expand upon, the philosophic and even scientific ideas of their time.

The second dimension is the experiential, which entails the actual quest for mystical experience: a direct, intuitive, unmediated encounter with a close but concealed deity. As Abraham Joshua Heschel puts it, mystics “want to taste the whole wheat of spirit before it is ground by the millstones of reason.” The

mystic specifically seeks the ecstatic experience of God, not merely knowledge about God. In their quest to encounter God, Jewish mystics live spiritually disciplined lives. While Jewish mysticism gives no sanction to monasticism, either formal or informal, experiential Kabbalists tend to be ascetics. And though Judaism keeps its mystics grounded—they are expected to marry, raise a family, and fulfill all customary communal religious obligations—they willfully expand the sphere of their pietistic practice beyond what tradition requires. Many Kabbalists create *hanganot* ("personal daily devotional practices"). Thus, in his will, one Kabbalist recommended this regime to his sons: periods of morning, afternoon, evening, and midnight **Prayer**; two hours devoted to the **Bible**, four and a half to **Talmud**, two to ethical and mystical texts, and two to other Jewish texts; one and a half hours to daily care, time to make a living—and five hours to **sleep** !

The third dimension is the practical, theurgic, or pragmatic Kabbalah (*Kabbalah Maasit* or *Kabbalah Shimmush*); the application of mystical power to effect change in our world, and the celestial worlds beyond ours. Practical Kabbalah consists of rituals for gaining and exercising power. It involves activating theurgic potential by the way one performs the **commandment**s, the summoning and controlling of angelic and demonic forces, and otherwise tapping into the supernatural energies present in Creation. The purpose of tapping into the practical Kabbalah is to further God's intention in the world: to advance good, subdue evil, heal, and mend. The true master of this art fulfills the human potential to be a co-creator with God.

Historians of Judaism identify many schools of Jewish esotericism across time, each with its own unique interests and beliefs.

As I noted above, Jewish mystics are not like monks or hermits. Kabbalists tend to be part of social circles rather than lone seekers. With few exceptions, such as the wandering mystic Abraham Abulafia, esoterically inclined Jews congregate in mystical brotherhoods and associations. It is not unusual for a single master to bring forth a new and innovative mystical school, which yields multiple generations of that particular mystical practice. While Kabbalah has been the practice of select Jewish "circles" up to this day, we know most of what we know from the many literary works that have been recognized as "mystical" or "esoteric."

From these mystical works, scholars identify many distinctive mystical schools, including the Hechalot mystics, the **German Pietist**, the Zoharic Kabbalah, the ecstatic school of Abraham Abulafia, the teachings of **Isaac**

Luria, and **Chasidism**. Scholars can break these groupings down even further based on individual masters and their disciples. Most mystical movements are deeply indebted to the writings of earlier schools, but as often as not, they add many innovative interpretations and new systems of thought to these existing teachings.

An important historical feature of Jewish esotericism is the tendency to compose mystical and esoteric works as **pseudepigrapha**—to portray a new revelation as the product of antiquity or of a particular worthy figure of the past. This is characteristic of many prominent mystical texts written before the dawn of the modern era, such as **Hechalot** texts, the **Bahir**, the **Zohar**, and of the writings of the Circle of the Unique Cherub. The practice of producing credited works only takes hold from the 15th to the 16th century onward. *SEE* CREATION; EMANATION; MEDITATION; SEFIROT; SUMMONING.

1. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 99–100.

Kabshiel: (כבשיאל). Angelic name that appears on **amulets**.

Kaddish: (קדיש). "Sanctification." This **Prayer** of divine praise, which makes no mention of death, has become inextricably associated with memorializing the dead. In part, this association has arisen from a story told of Rabbi **Akiba**. In *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, we learn that Akiba once encountered a **ghost**. The Sage inquired as to why the spirit could not find rest, so the ghost related that it was his punishment for having failed to religiously educate his son. Akiba then took it upon himself to teach the boy the prayer service. When the boy finally recited the words of Kaddish, his father's **soul** was released (also see Sanh. 104a).

Perhaps because of this incident, it has become the practice to recite Kaddish daily for a year after the death of a close relative, in the belief that it will ease the soul's time in **Gehenna**, which can last up to a year. Customarily, a surviving relative says Kaddish for eleven months rather than the twelve of a full year, so as not to suggest to others that one considers the deceased so wicked that he or she deserved a full year of punishment. *SEE* DEATH.

Kaf: Eleventh letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**. The letter represents **Keter**, "crown," the first emanation of the **sefirot**. It is also the first letter of the word **karet**, "cut off." Every Jew potentially shares in this supernal **crown** when he or she chooses to embrace the "crowns" God has provided: the crown of **Torah**, of kingship, of the **priesthood**, or of a good name. By contrast, those Jews who

utterly reject these crowns are spiritually cut off from both the power and blessings of God.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 133–37.

Kaf: (כף). “Hand/Palm.” *SEE* FINGER; HAND.

Kaf ha-Kela: (כף הקלע). “Sling Pocket.” One of the seven compartments of **Gehenna**. The name is derived from a biblical passage, “The **souls** of Your enemies shall be slung out, as from a *kaf kela*” (1 Sam. 25:29). In Kaf Kela, the punishing angels play, so to speak, a relentless game of lacrosse, tossing the souls of the transgressors back and forth as their game balls (*Masechet Gehinnom*). In **Zohar**, the term is taken to be an idiomatic term for the process of transmigration undergone by the impure soul (Zohar I:77b, 217b; Zohar II:59a, 99b).

Kaftzefoni: (קפצפוני). A **demon** and occasional consort of **Lilith** (*Treatise on the Left Emanation*).

Kaftziel: (קפציאל). Planetary **Angel** of Saturn (*SY; Sefer Raziel*). He is prominently featured in this Hebreo-Arabic astrological-magic text:

> On the seventh day rules Qaphsiel. This angel is of bad augury, for he is appointed only over evil. He is in the likeness of a man in mourning, and has two horns, and angel servants as the other angels aforementioned … If thou wishes to make use of them to lower a man from his high position, make a tablet of tin and draw on it the likeness of an old man with out stretched hands; under his right hand draw the image of a little man, and write on his forehead Qubiel; on the left, the image of a man crying … The use of this tablet is that if thou placest it on the seat of a mighty man, or a king, or a priest, he will fall from his position, and if thou puttest it in a place where many people are assembled, they will scatter and go away from that spot. If thou placest it in a spot where they are building a town, or a tower, it will be destroyed … (Gaster, *Wisdom of the Chaldeans*)

Kahana: Talmudic Sage (ca. 3rd–4th century). His beauty was compared to that of **Adam**. After slaying a government spy in Babylonia, he fled to the **Land of Israel** to the circle of R. Yochanan. In a karmic turn, a fit of annoyance, Rabbi Yochanan slew him with the **evil eye**, but later resurrected him. After that, Kahana opted to leave Yochanan’s academy (B.K. 117a–b).

Kalonymus (or Qalonymus) Family: This dynasty of medieval Rhineland Jews produced a line of distinguished rabbis. They also had their own familial collection of esoteric traditions that shaped the teachings of the **German Pietist**.[1]

1. Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 1, 356.

Kamia: (קמיע). "Amulet." A charm or talisman. *SEE* AMULET.

Kapkafuni: (כפקפוני). A possessing **demons** queen mentioned in a medieval Jewish exorcism text (*Shoshan Yesod ha-Olam*).

Kapparah: (קפרה). "Expiation." In the theurgic ceremony of kapparah, performed on the eve of **Yom Kippur**, traditional Jews transfer their **sin** to a **bird** by waving it around their heads three times while reciting the words, "This bird is my surrogate, my substitute, my atonement; this cock shall meet death, but I shall find a long and pleasant life of peace." Then the **animal**, usually a chicken, is slaughtered and donated to the poor. First mentioned in the literature of the Gaonic period (9th century CE), the practice has enjoyed popular support for centuries, despite the disapproval of many prestigious rabbinical authorities such as Nachmanides and Joseph Caro. Most modernist Orthodox Jews opt to replace the hen with a sack of cash, which is then given as **charity**.

Among the Jews of Kurdistan, a form of kapparah is performed at the birth of a child, and the **blood** of the slaughtered animal sprinkled in the birth room, evidently to protect the newborn from suffering the consequences of the sins of its parents. A similar practice for newlyweds is known to be an old German-Jewish practice.[1] *SEE* COCK; SACRIFICE; SUBSTITUTION.; THEURGY

1. Sperber, *The Jewish Life Cycle*, 25, 301.

Karet: (כרת)."Cut off/Extirpation." A divine punishment mentioned in the **Bible** (Gen. 17:14), usually meted out for acts of gross disrespect toward **heaven** (desecrating the Shabbat, **idolatry**) or toward another person (incest, adultery). The Mishnah has a tractate, *Keritot*, which identifies thirty-six crimes that merit karet. Nachmanides believed being "cut off" referred to the **soul** being reincarnated in a more degraded **Body** (Commentary to Lev. 18:29). Isaac Luria taught it involved the lower **soul** (**nefesh**) being unable to make the journey into the afterlife and was the cause of **ghosts** and dybbuks (Zohar III:57b, 217a; *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* 4).

Kasdiel: An Egyptian sorcerer, the father-in-law of the biblical Ishmael (*Sefer Meir Tehillot* 91).

Kastimon and Afrira: “Inquisitor and Dust.” A pair of demonic shape-changing notables, emissaries of light and dark who spring from the actions of **Cain**, who rule over the underworld of Arka. Like most binary entities in **Kabbalah**, they represent male and female (**evil**) forces. They resemble **serafim** and Chayyot, but also take on human and **serpent** form (Zohar I:9b).

Kastirin: (קסטמון). “Tormentor.” A class of **demons** mentioned in the Zohar (Zohar I:20a).

Katnut: (קתנון). “Naivity; small-mindedness.” In classic **Kabbalah**, this is the state of immature intellect, the precursor to mochin. It is **Malchut** seen from the perspective of the practitioner, the first step toward expanded consciousness. Nachman of Bratzlav reverses this judgment, teaching that it conveys a kind of humility, and *katnut* is the path to humble insight.[1]

1. Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth and Messianism*, 119–22.

Kavanah: (קתנות). “Intention/Concentration.” Judaism teaches that proper intention is essential to meaningful **Prayer** (Yad. Tefillah 4:16; *Hovot Levavot*). The Kabbalists go further, teaching that developing the right state of mind is an absolute prerequisite for any religious act or **ritual** to have *gevurah* (“spiritual energy”). Kavvanot take on a theurgic role in activating and uniting the **sefirot** and/or **Partzufim**, the exact application varying from teacher to teacher. Often this kavanah requires extended meditation exercises. There are even techniques called *kavanot* to help achieve this concentration.[1] **Isaac Luria** initiates this elaborate mystical practice of kavvanot, culminating in the *Siddur Nusach ha-Ari* and the techniques of the Beit El Circle. *SEE* MEDITATION; YICHUDIM.

1. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 275–77.

Kavanot, Sefer ha-: A collection of the teachings of **Chayyim Vital** , especially focusing on mystical **meditations** and **Prayers** and the cultivating of the right intention to make them efficacious, that is part of the larger work Eitz Hayyim. There are at least two other anthologies of mystical customs that go by the same name.

Kavod: (כבוד). *SEE* GLORY.

Kedushah or Kedushat ha-Shem: (קדושה). A liturgical **Prayer** that appears several times in the prayer book. The text is constructed from the various appearances of **Angels**in the **Bible** and the words they spoke. One version, included in the prayer *Yotzer Or*, lists the classes of angels that attend upon God:

> Then the Ophanim and the holy Chayyot, with great noise raise themselves towards the Seraphim. Facing them they give praise saying: "Blessed is the glory of Adonai from His place."

The goal of the prayer is mimetic, for the congregation to mirror, and in essence, become one with the angelic choirs in their praise of God. In their astral ascensions, Merkavah mystics and **German Pietist** took a particular interest in the **music** of the angels when they recited their *kedushah* praises to God. The ascendant mystic would learn these melodies to bring them back to **Earth** for use in the **synagogue**.[1]

1. Schafer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, 46–49. Also see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*.

Kefitzat ha-Derech: (קפיצת הדרך). "Bounding of the Path." *SEE* TELEPORTATION.

Kelach Pitchei Chochmah: "One Hundred and Thirty-Eight Openings of Wisdom." A Kabbalistic treatise by Moses Luzzato giving special attention to the architecture of the **soul**.

Kelipot: (קליפות). "Husks." Remnants of the cosmic tragedy associated with the fall of **Adam Kadmon**, these husks of **evil** encase the scattered sparks of divine holiness that must be released by humanity and restored to their divine source through the spiritual process of **Tikkun** (Zohar I:4b; *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* 3; *Sefer ha-Tikkunim*). According to the **Zohar**, they exist in four strata (I: 19b). Their existence is utterly dependent upon human action, and they are fed and strengthened by human transgression. Later Kabbalistic thought develops a taxonomy of different types of kelipot, including the nogah, an admixture of good and evil that energizes all demonic forces. (Zohar I:1a; *Tanya* 1–2). The most powerful of all kelipot, their organizing principle, is personified as **Samael**. Later Chasidic thinkers start to distinguish between redeemable (*kelipot nogah*) and unredeemable kelipot (*Tanya*, Igeret Teshuvah 6–7). *SEE* BREAKING OF THE VESSELS; NITZOTZ.

Kelonymus Baal ha-Nes: Wonderworking rabbi (Israel, ca. 17th century). This **Jerusalem** rabbi miraculously restored a Christian child to life using the **Tetragrammaton**. In doing so, he thwarted an attempt to blame the Jews of Jerusalem for a blood libel. Pilgrims still visit his grave on the Mount of Olives, believing his merit will ensure their safe return home.

Kemuel: (קמואל). Angel who guards the gates of **heaven** (*Gedulat Moshe*). While **Moses** was receiving the **Torah** in heaven, Kemuel attempted to expel him. Moses was forced to destroy him (PR 20; BhM 1:58–60; Ir *El Gibborim* piyut).

Kenahora: ([rahanyyq). "No **evil eye**!" A Yiddish exclamatory incantation used to thwart the evil eye when one feels vulnerable to its attack.

Kerubiel: (כרוביאל). "[Supreme] Cherub of God." Chief **Angel** of the **Cherubs**. He is robed in the **rainbow** (III Enoch 22).

Keshet: (קשת). "Bow." Sign of the Hebrew **zodiac** for the month of Kislev (Sagittarius). A symbol of both peace (Gen. 9) and war, it signifies the varied interaction of Jews and non-Jews; it symbolizes both **Joseph**, who thrived in a foreign land, and Chanukah, which exemplified conflict with gentiles.[1] *SEE* BOW.

1. Erlanger, *Signs of the Times*, 161–98.

Kesilim: (כסלים). "Fools/Imps." Impish spirits. Belief in these creatures is derived from a supernatural interpretation of Proverbs 14, which speaks of the misleading ways of the *kesilim* (*Emek ha-Melech*).

Ketem Paz: A commentary on the **Zohar** by Shem Tov ibn Gaon.

Keter: (כתר). "Crown." The "highest" of the **sefirot**, it is the first to emerge from the Ein Sof. It is the intentionality, the desire of the Ein Sof to bring forth **Creation**. It is usually conceived in terms of **paradox**, such as "hidden light," or *via negativa*, by describing only what it is *not*; it is "no thing." The divine name *El Elyon* ("God most High") is linked to Keter. It is also equated with Arikh Anpin in the Lurianic theory of **Partzufim**.

Keter Malchut: (כתר מלכות). "Crown of kingship." A critical, yet undefined mystical attribute of the **Messiah**, it is also the name of a treatise on **astrology** written by Solomon Gabirol.

Ketev Meriri: A **demon** (Pes. 111b). *SEE* BITTER DESTRUCTION.

Keturah: The wife taken by **Abraham** after the death of **Sarah** (Gen. 22), the Sages teach that she is actually Hagar, Abraham's maidservant and father of his first child, Ishmael (Gen. R. 61).

Key: (מפתח). According to Sanhedrin 113a, God possesses three keys: to **rain**, to **childbirth**, and to **resurrection**. All other keys God has given over to

"messengers" (i.e., angels and humanity), but these three remain God's sole prerogative (Also see Tan. 2a).

Metatron possesses twelve of these keys:

> Twelve celestial keys are entrusted to Metatron through the mystery of the holy name, four of which are the four separated secrets of the lights … And this light, which rejoices the heart, provides the illumination of wisdom and discernment so that one may know and ponder. These are the four celestial keys, in which are contained all the other keys, and they have all been entrusted to this supreme head, Metatron, the great prince, all of them being within his Master's secrets, in the engravings of the mysteries of the holy, ineffable name.[1]

In the **Zohar**, this is magnified to six hundred and thirteen, or even one thousand keys:

> All the supernal secrets were delivered into his hands and he, in turn, delivered them to those who merited them. Thus, he performed the mission the Blessed Holy One assigned to him. One thousand keys were delivered into his hands and he takes one hundred blessings every day and creates unifications for his Master (Zohar I:37b, 181a, 223b; Zohar III:60a).

The angel Yechdiah has the keys to the divine treasury (III: 129a).

In Midrash Pesikta Rabbati, at the time of the Roman destruction of the Second **Temple**, the High **priest** cast the keys to the building up toward **heaven** where they were caught by an angelic **hand**. The High Priest then offered the sacred Temple vessels (or instruments) to the **Earth** and the ground swallowed them up. When the **Messiah** comes, all these Temple articles will be and restored.

1. I. Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. II (New York: B'nai Brith Books, 1989), 644.

Key of Solomon: (*Mafteach Shlomo*). A late-medieval (14th century or later) magical text credited to **Solomon** and devoted primarily to the summoning of **Angels** and **demons** and the construction of **amulets**. It describes the use of magical **circles** in some detail. There are multiple Hebrew and Latin versions and the book has Jewish, Hermetic, and Christian influences present. It's magical diagrams have been widely appropriated for a variety of magical and Hermetic practices. *SEE* TESTAMENT OF SOLOMON.

Khazars: A Turkish-speaking tribe of the Crimean-Central Asian regions that purportedly converted to Judaism in the early Middle Ages (ca. 740 CE). This

Jewish kingdom survived for over a century until overwhelmed by the expanding Rus peoples from the north, spawning numerous legends.[1]

A popular anti-Jewish **myth** circulating among anti-Semitic groups is that modern Jews from eastern Europe are not Semites at all, and have no relationship to the ancient Jews of the **Bible**. Rather, we are all really Turkish descendants of the Khazars (and therefore somehow "pseudo" Jews), despite historical, demographic, linguistic, and, most recently, genetic evidence that reveal the specious nature of this claim.[2]

1. Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 10, 944–49.

2. M. Hoffman, *Campaign for Radical Truth in History*, http://www. hoffman-info.com.

Kiddush: (קדוש). The **ritual** for initiating a **Sabbath** or holiday by reciting a blessing over wine. Once blessed, Kiddush wine is believed to have medicinal power (*Beit Yosef*, Orach Chayyim 269). The *kiddush l'vanah* ("Sanctification of the [new] **moon**," in particular, was thought to have theurgic power, a belief that first appears in **Zohar** III:95a, then took hold over European Jews sometime in the 17th century.

Kiddush L'vanah: (קדוש לבנה). "Sanctifying/Blessing the Moon." *SEE* NEW MOON.

Kiddushat ha-Shem: (קדושת השם). "Sanctifying the Name." The act of accepting martyrdom rather than refute one's faith. The willingness to accept **Death** rather than deny a doctrine or **commandment** of Judaism has been celebrated in Jewish tradition since the example set by **Daniel** and his companions in the **Bible**. Naturally, most Jews facing martyrdom have not enjoyed the miraculous deliverances recorded for those biblical worthies. Nevertheless, anyone who dies to honor God is declared "holy," and by the medieval period, artifacts associated with them, their gravesites, and even their names, were believed to be imbued with great spiritual power. The martyrs themselves can expect an exalted place in **Eden**. *SEE* LAMED-VAVNIKS; RIGHTEOUS, THE; TEN MARTYRS.

Kinder Benimmerins: (קינדער בנימאין). Bloodlusting **witches** who slay **children**:

> The Blind Dragon is between Samael and the Evil Lilith. And he brings about a union between them only in the hour of pestilence, the Merciful One save us! … And this Lilith has fourteen evil times and evil names and evil factions. And all [her offspring] are ordained to kill the children—may we be saved!—and especially through the witches who are called *Kinder Benimmerins* in the

language of the Ashkenaz. (*Emek ha-Melech* 140b, trans. from *Gates of the Old City* 81)

Kingdom of God: (מלכות שדי/*Malchut Shaddai*, also *Malchut Shamayim*). This concept has multiple connotations, including the individual act of cleaving to God (Deut. R. 2:31), but usually refers to the advent of the **Messiah** and the Messianic Era. A brief summary of the main ideas is this: At a time deemed appropriate to God, based on either the radical improvement or the radical decline of the human moral condition, there will be a final reconciliation (*tikkun olam*) of the world's political and social order with the establishment of the Kingdom of God on **Earth** under the leadership of the Messiah. The **nations** will be brought into harmony and the recognition of God's dominion will be complete, making an end to war, exploitation, and inequity. This period will mark the restoration of the Davidic dynasty to Israel, the return of **Prophecy**, and, for all intents and purposes, the end of history. At some point during this Messianic kingdom, the natural order and human nature as we now know it will be radically transformed. The dead, having already made preliminary journeys through the afterlife, will be restored to a perfected bodily existence through **resurrection**, brought to final **judgment**, and those who merit it will live out an ideal life. After **Death** the individual **soul** will dwell in eternal bliss in the presence of God. *SEE* ESCHATOLOGY; KADDISH; WORLD TO COME.

Kings, Books of: The books Kings I and II contain many of the most famous **miracles** recorded in the **Bible**, outside those of the **Torah**. The central **Prophets** of the books, **Elijah** and Elisha, are conspicuous wonderworkers, doing things as minor as levitating **iron** in **water** , to feats as dramatic as resurrecting the dead.

Kipod: (קפד). **Demon** prince; guardian of a gate of **Gehenna** (MG).

Kiss: (נשיקה). The kiss as a spiritual act has a long history in Judaism. It is closely linked with the handling and learning of **Torah**. Jews often kiss a Torah scroll when it is brought into the congregation. People will kiss a Chumash or **siddur** that has been dropped. Students would kiss the **hand** of their master after a learning session, symbolically acknowledging the hand that "fed" them spiritual sustenance (PdRE 2; Zohar III:147a). Masters would kiss disciples on the head as a kind of initiation **ritual** (T. Chag. 2:2). In the **Zohar**, in particular, masters would kiss students, often on the eyes, when they had demonstrated an insight or high attainment of **wisdom**.[1] A kiss constitutes the fusion of spirit to spirit

(II:124b).

In the highest **heaven**, the **Angels** who serve before the **Throne of Glory** kiss God during the afternoon worship. God too, kisses (S of S 1:1), in one case, the image of the **Patriarch Jacob** engraved upon the Throne of Glory:

> I [God] bend over it, embrace, kiss and fondle it [the image of Jacob] and my hands are upon its arms, three times, when you speak before me "holy." As it is said: holy, holy, holy. (Schafer, *Synopse* #64)

A special category of kiss is the kiss of God (*Meitah be-nesikah* in Hebrew or *mise binishike* in Yiddish, both of which are literally "kiss of death"). This refers to **Death** directly at the hands of God (or the *Shekhinah*):

> 930 kinds of death were created in the world … The most difficult is plague, the easiest of all is a kiss. Plague is like burr being pulled through a wool fleece or like stalks in your throat. A kiss is as gentle as drawing a hair out of milk. (Ber. 8a)

The concept arises from the death of **Moses**, where it is said he died *al pi Adonai*, "at God's command," but literally "upon God's mouth" (Deut. 34). This easiest of all deaths circumvents the dreaded **Angel of Death**. According to the Sages, only six people have died this way: **Abraham**, **Isaac**, **Jacob**, **Miriam**, **Aaron**, and Moses (B.B. 17a; S of S R. 1:2; Tanh. Va-Etchanan). The corpses of those who die via the divine kiss do not defile the living who touch them with ritual impurity (Nachmanides, comment to Num. 19:2). In later Jewish mystical writings, a number of kabbalistic masters die in **ecstasy** via the "kiss" (Zohar III:144b; *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* 39). Jewish **mysticism** also equated the "kiss" with **devekut**, mystical fusion with God (Zohar II:53a).

1. A. Green, "Introducing the Pritzker Edition Zohar" (lecture, Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Toronto, June 2004).

Kleidon: Listening to **children** at **study** to hear **omens** in the verses they recite. *SEE* DIVINATION

Knesset Yisrael: (כנסת ישראל)."The Assembly of Israel." The idealized, transpersonal collectivity of the Jewish people (Ket. 118a). Over time the connotation of the term evolves, and *Knesset Israel* is elevated by the Sages to be a hypostatic entity, a feminine counterpart to God:

> Whoever does not bless after the meal is described as looting his father and mother; The former is the Blessed Holy One, the latter is Knesset Israel. (Ber. 35b) [Also see Eruv. 21b and S o S R. 3:15–19]

Sometimes Rachel serves as the personification of the people. This particular hypostasis can take on a decidedly erotic tone:

> Israel is beloved! … This can be compared to a king who said to his wife: adorn yourself in jewelry so that you may be desirable to me … So the Blessed Holy One said to Israel, “my children, adorn yourself with mitzvot so that you will be desirable to Me.” (Sif. D. 36)

In **Kabbalah** it becomes a synonym for **Shekhinah** (Zohar III:6a, 79a–b, 187b).

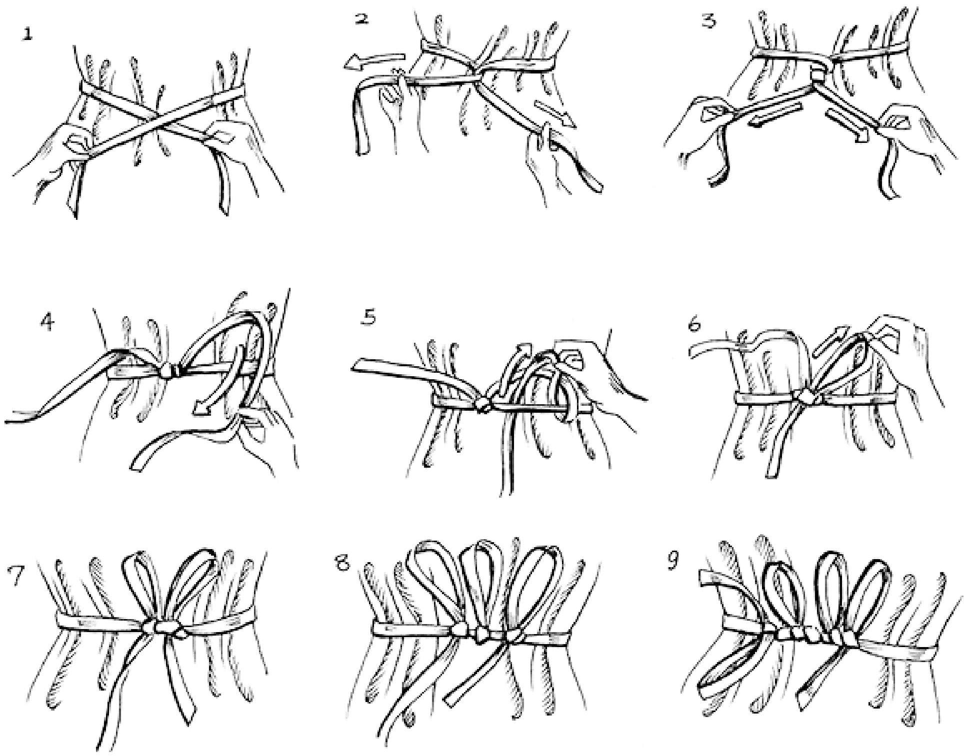
Knives: Knives are a symbol of power and force and as such are sometimes used in theurgic rites. The fact that they are made from **metal**, especially **iron**, only enhances their magical potential:

> R. Johanan said: For an inflammatory fever let one take an all-iron knife, go whither thorn-hedges are to be found, and tie a white twisted thread thereto. On the first day he must slightly notch it, and say, “and the angel of the Lord appeared unto him,” etc. On the following day he [again] makes a small notch and says, “And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see,” etc. The next day he makes [another] small notch and says, “And when the Lord saw that he turned aside [Sar] to see.” R. Aha son of Raba said to R. Ashi, Then let him say, “Draw not nigh hither?” [i.e., “Fever, leave the victim and come into the bush”]. (Shab. 67a)

Here the knife serves in a ritual for **healing**. There seems to be a special relationship between knives and the demonic: the **Angel of Death** is sometimes portrayed as wielding a butcher’s knife (J. Ket. 7:10), and knives are used for summoning **demons** and as a magical defense against evil spirits.[1]

Knives are often used in the creation of magic circles. A knife under a pillow will protect a childbearing woman against demonic attack. Specially constructed blades hum when **poison** is present. Knives are also used in casting curses.

1. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 114, 298.



Tying knots on a death shroud

Knots: Knots represent the power to restrict and restrain. The knotted fringes commanded to be worn by the Israelites in the book of Numbers are symbolic reminders that the Jews have "bound" themselves to God even as the fringes are conduits of divine power. Knots were used in Greco-Roman **magic** as a sympathetic act in cursing **rituals**. In Jewish esoteric lore, this constricting capacity especially manifests itself in issues of **fertility**. Therefore, one should avoid knots around brides or **women** in **childbirth**. Seven loops of knots can fend off **witchcraft** (Shab. 66a). Knots tied to the left arm combined with **incantations** can curb obsessive behavior and "longing." Various rituals of using knots for protection can be found among different Jewish communities in the Middle Ages.[1] In many communities even today, special knots, tied so as to resemble the **Hebrew** letters *shin*, dalet, and *yud* are bound to the shrouds of a corpse during its preparation for **burial**, apparently so the spirits and **Angels** would recognize the deceased as a Jew, one who belongs to *SHaDaY.* SEE KOSHER FODEM.

1. Frankel, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*, 92.

Kochviel: (כוכביאל). "Prince of Stars." He is an angel that falls from **heaven** after lusting for the daughters of humanity. He taught humanity the art of **astrology** (I Enoch).

Kohan: *SEE* PRIESTHOOD AND PRIEST.

Kohen Brothers: *SEE* JACOB BEN JACOB HA-KOHEN; ISAAC BEN JACOB HA-KOHEN.

Kohen, Naphtali: Wonderworking rabbi (German, ca. 17th century). A master in the use of divine names, he magically protected the communities he served from fires. He also possessed a **ring** of power like the one owned by **Solomon**, and used it to exorcise **demons**. At the end of his life, he became mentally unbalanced.

Komm: (קום). An **Angel** who guides Joshua ben Levi on a tour of **Gehenna** (BhM II: 48–51).

Korach ben Izhar: This biblical rebel against the authority of **Moses** was swallowed up by the **Earth** for his effrontery (Num. 16:26).

According to the Sages, Korach was so arrogant because of being extraordinarily wealthy, having found treasures which **Joseph** had concealed. Just the keys of Korach's treasuries burdened three hundred mules (Pes. 119a; Sanh. 110a).

Korach was simultaneously burned and buried alive (Tanh. Korach 23). When the ground swallowed up Korach, the earth became like a vacuum, and everything that belonged to him, even his possessions that had been borrowed by persons far away, found their way into the chasm (J. Sanh. 10:1; Num. R. 50). He and his followers burned in **Gehenna** until Hannah prayed for them (Gen. R. 98:3). Because of her merit, Korach will eventually have a place in **Eden** (AdRN 36; Num. R. 18:11). Rabbah bar Channah related that he was shown the place where Korach and his company went down. Listening to the crack in the earth, he heard voices saying: "Moses and his Torah are true; and we are liars" (B.B. 74a).

Kosem Kesamim: (קושם קשמים). "Augurer/Diviner/Magician." The biblical word (Deut. 18) is related to the Arabic, "to divide," (i.e., drawing **lots**). Such individuals are often linked in Hebrew Scriptures with false **prophecy**. *SEE* DIVINATION

Kosher: *SEE* FOOD.

Kosher Fodem: "Fit string." An outgrowth of the Ashkenazi pious custom known variously as *Kneytlekh Legn* ("laying wicks") or *Korim Mesn* ("measuring graves"). In Poland and other Eastern European communities, pious **women**

would go, en mass, to graveyards and lay thread around the graves of people known for their piety in life. This seemingly morbid practice was actually a spirited and popular women's outing.[1] The string so prepared, was thought to "absorb" a measure of the dead soul's merit. Most often, the strings would be cut into wicks, made into **Candles**, and then donated to a **synagogue** or house of study.

This was a charitable effort to support these sacred institutions, but it was also done out of "enlightened" self-interest. Commonly the donation would be made to coincide with High Holidays or an illness or trouble in the family, in hopes of receiving divine **intercession**. The candles could also be reserved for rituals of **divination** or as a means to protect the household against malevolent forces.[2] No doubt, some of this string was simply attached to places of vulnerability one wanted to protect—a baby crib or birthing bed, for example. And some just got tied around the wrist.

1. M. Wex, *Born to Kvetch: Yiddish Language and Culture in All of Its Moods* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), 178.

2. Weissler, "Measuring Graves, and Laying Wicks," 61–80.

Kriat Sh'ma al ha-Mitah: (קריאת שמע על המטה). "Bedtime recitation of the Sh'ma." In Deuteronomy 6, every Jew is commanded to meditate upon God's unity when rising and when going to bed. *Kriat Sh'ma al ha-Mitah* is the **ritual** that fulfills that obligation (*Siddur*). The ritual also includes a number of protective **Prayers** and verses (Gen. 48:16), invoking God's protection against bad **dreams**, illness, nighttime spirits, and asking the **Shekhinah** and the four **Angels** surrounding the **Throne of Glory**—**Michael**, **Gabriel**, **Raphael**, and **Uriel**—to also guard the person while asleep. *SEE* SLEEP.

Kuf: (ק). Nineteenth letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**. It has the linguistic value of "k" and the numeric value of one hundred. It signifies holiness and circularity.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 194–98.

Kushiel or Koshiel: (קושיאל). "Severity of God." A punishing **Angel** of **Gehenna**, he governs one of the seven compartments, "Well of Destruction" (Mid. Konen).

Kvittel: (קוויטל). A written request for spiritual guidance, **healing**, or miraculous intervention. Its roots are found in the Hebrew **Bible** (1 Sam. 9:6–8; Prov. 16:14) and **Talmud** (B.B. 116a; Ber. 34a). There are two forms of kvittel: the type inserted into a shrine, such as the Western Wall in **Jerusalem** (PdRE 35), and those sent by a Chasid to a Chasidic master. The text usually has a standard or

stereotypical form. The latter type is normally accompanied by a pidyon nefesh, a donation meant for the upkeep of the master and his household (some **rebbes** were famed for refusing such gratuities as corrupting).

Sometimes the kvittel initiated a face-to-face audience, called a yechidut, with the rebbe. At other times, the tzadik would respond in writing. Their recipients treated such letters as spiritual relics. Kvittels are even written to dead saints and are left on the grave, in the belief that the spiritual **intercession** of that particular **Righteous** individual can transcend even death.[1]

1. Z. Schachter-Shalomi and E. Hoffman, *Sparks of Light: Counseling in the Hasidic Tradition* (Boulder, CO: Shambala, 1983), 83–84. Also see Z. Schachter-Shalomi, *Spiritual Intimacy: A Study of Counseling in Hasidism* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996).

Kvorim Mesn: (קבורים מעסן). “Measuring Graves.” The Ashkenazi custom of **women** measuring cemeteries and graves with candlewick. Having been exposed to the sanctity of meritorious **ancestors**, the wicks would then be cut and made into **Candles** to be used during the High Holy Days in **rituals**, **divinations**, and as protection against spirits.[1] *SEE* KOSHER FODEM.

1. Weissler, “Measuring Graves, Laying Wicks,” 61–80.

L



Laban: **Jacob's** father-in-law (Gen. 30) was not only the cunning, manipulative person as portrayed in the **Bible**, he was a master of **witchcraft** (*Targum Yerushalmi*, RaSHI on Gen. 30:27; Zohar I:133b, 164b). In one tradition, he is identified as the grandfather of Balaam (Tanh. Balak 12).

Labyrinth: (מבוך). Conceptualizing the path to enlightenment as a maze that the spiritual pilgrim must travel is a theme that appears in several religious traditions, including Judaism.[1] The Jewish use of labyrinths is almost entirely limited to storytelling, written narratives, and diagrams. In one of the earliest examples, a commentator compares the biblical book **Song of Songs** to a labyrinth:

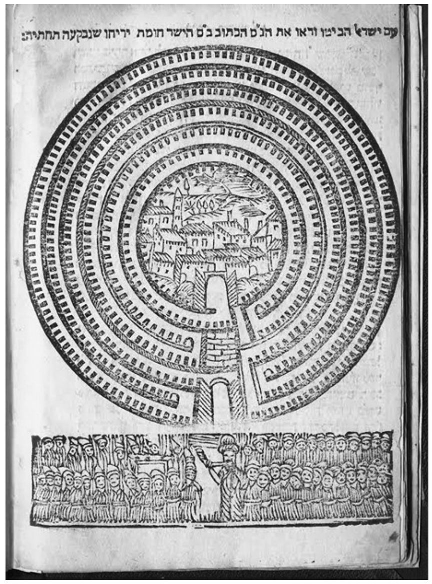
> It [the Song of Songs] is like a great palace with many entrances and all who enter it would lose the way to the entrance. A wise man [Solomon] came and took a rope [allegorical/parabolic interpretations] and tied it to the entrance, and all would enter and exit by following the rope. (S of S R. 1:8)

1. G. Dennis, "Finding the Center, Entering the Land: The Labyrinths of Jewish Imagination," *Parabola: Tradition, Myth, and the Search for Meaning*, vol. 34 (2009): 31–42.

Maimonides, for example, tells the parable of the multichambered King's **palace** to illustrate the journey to **wisdom** (*Moreh Nevukhim* 3.51). Several of the parabolic tales of Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav feature a quest that involves negotiating mazelike forests and castles. The **Baal Shem Tov** describes the "palace of the King" (the world) as a place of many locked doors and many keys, in which the **soul** must somehow make its way (*Or Yesharim*). Indeed, the labyrinth is a common motif in Hasidic literature:

> A man lost his way in a great forest. Each time he thought he was getting somewhere, he found himself even more lost. After a while another lost his way and chanced upon the first. Without knowing what had happened to him, he asked the way out of the woods. "I don't know," said the first, "I only know the way that leads deeper into the thicket, so let us go a route neither have gone and try to find the way together." (Chayyim of Tzanz)

The most enduring labyrinth visual motif is that of the "Jericho" Labyrinth. Inspired by the seven-circuit journey required to conquer the city (Josh. 24:11), the belief that the city was fortified by seven mazelike walls first appears in Sefer ha-Rokeach. This belief was acted out ritually on the holiday of Hashanah Rabbah by making seven *hakafot* ("circuits") in the **synagogue**. The first visual representations appear in the Xanten Codex and in the Fadhi Bible Codex (14th century). Inclusion in biblical manuscripts recurs until the advent of the printing press, when it seems to shift largely to "tour books" celebrating the Holy Land. For example, a small 18th-century book for Holy Land pilgrims, *Zicharon Birushalayim* ("Memory of Jerusalem"), includes a woodcut illustration of Jericho in which the city sits amidst a seven-walled labyrinth.[1]



Jericho Labyrinth from a medieval Bible Image
by permission of the Klau Library

The **sefirot** can be understood in terms of a labyrinth. This is made clear by one of the few existing graphic illustrations of a Jewish labyrinth, which consists of a Kabbalistic "perspective diagram," a drawing of the ten first letters of the names of the sefirot nested inside each other, so that the lines of each letter represent the walls and the gaps in the empty spaces of each letter represent the openings (*Pardes Rimmonim*).

1. A. Karp, *From the Ends of the Earth: Judaic Treasures of the Library of Congress* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 87.

Lailah: (לילה)). "Night." Not to be confused with **Lilith**, this is the **Angel** of **conception** (and **sex**):

> For R. Chanina b. Papa made the following exposition: The name of the angel who is in charge of conception is "Night," and he takes up a drop and places it in the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He, saying, "Sovereign of the universe, what shall be the fate of this drop? Shall it produce a strong man or a weak man, a wise man or a fool, a rich man or a poor man?" (Nid. 16b)

Lailah escorts new **souls** to their bodies and erases from their memories all the **Torah** they knew in the Guf ha-Briyot (Sanh. 6b; Tanh. Pekudei 3; Zohar I:91b; ZCh 68.3). It may be that Lailah is regarded as the good doppelganger and antipode to Lilith, though this is not confirmed explicitly in any text.

Lailah is also portrayed as a warrior angel:

> [discussing asking for divine help in battle, the Sages quote] "If I [King Sennacherib] go [to battle] and am successful, I will sacrifice my two sons to thee," he vowed. But his sons heard this, so they killed him … So he fought against them, he and his servants, by night [*lailah*] and smote them (2 Kings 19:37) … R. Isaac the smith, said: He [the angel] set into motion the activities of the night [i.e., the stars] on his behalf, as it is written, They [fought for Deborah, Barak, and Israel] fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. (Judg. 5:20; Sanh. 96a)

Though it is never stated explicitly in the sources, the name is feminine in gender, suggesting *Lailah* is a female angel. The interpretation of the words *lail* and *lailah* in **Zohar** II:38b comes the closest to confirming this assumption.

Lamed: (ל). Twelfth letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**. It has the numeric value of thirty and the linguistic value of "l." The word *lamed* itself derives from the root verb for learning. It also signifies majesty and emotion (*lev* is the Hebrew word for "**heart**"). Since *lamed* is also used as the sign for the preposition "to/toward," it conveys purpose and direction.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 138–43.

Lamed-Vavniks: (ל"ויניק). "The Thirty-Six [Righteous]." Also referred to as *tzadikim nistarim (*"hidden righteous"). These are the minimum number of righteous people in each generation that are necessary to sustain the world. The legend evidently evolved from two sources: the implicit assumption that there must a minimum number of righteous people in a locale for it to merit enduring (Gen. 18:16–33), and a cognate tradition of interpreting the "thirty shekels of silver" mentioned in Zechariah 11:12 as an allegory for godly people; God ensures there will always be thirty righteous people in every generation. (Gen. R. 49:3; Zohar I:105b).

In the earliest version, found in Gen. R. 49:3, there are forty-five, "fifteen in Babylon, thirty in the **Land of Israel**." There is no firm explanation for how the tradition settled on the number 36:

> There are not less than 36 *tzadikim*/righteous persons in the world who receive the *Shekhinah.* (Sanh. 97b)

Tikkunei Zohar 21 uses **gematria** on their biblical phrase "their **heart** was divided" (Hos. 10:2) to double this number—thirty-six in the land of Israel, thirty-six in the *galut* ("exile").

Perhaps it is because in gematria, eighteen is the numeric value of the word for *chai* ("life"), so thirty-six (double *chai*) signifies "abundant life." The term Lamed-Vavniks is Yiddish, constructed from the Hebrew letters lamed and vav (these two letters have the combined numeric value of thirty-six) and adding the Russian/Yiddish genitive -*nik*. According to the "thirty-six" legend, most of the thirty-six are *nistar*, unknown, anonymously doing their good work unnoticed by the world. The reward for their anonymous labors is to be privileged to directly experience the **Shekhinah**. One of them in each generation is suitable to be the **Messiah** (Suk. 45b; Gen. R. 35:2; Mid. Teh. 5:5). *SEE* RIGHTEOUS, THE

Lamp: (מנורה). In the **Bible**, lamps are a symbol of enlightenment, **wisdom**, and the **Torah**.

Both the Bible and rabbinic literature assume **oil** lamps to be the primary means of portable or personal **light**.

The Chanukah **menorah** serves as a reminder of a miraculous event entailing a lamp, the rededication of the **Temple** by the Maccabees, when enough oil for only one day's burning miraculous burned eight days.

Lamps can be used for the **divination** of death **omens**. A lamp is lit in a house sufficient for the duration of the Ten Days of Awe. If it extinguishes during that time, it is a sign that someone in that house will die within the year (Hor. 12a). In Sefer he-Razim, a lamp is used as part of a **ritual** to summon angelic beings.

The use of wicks embedded in wax tapers is relatively recent among Jews. But as the times and places where **Candles** were used for Jewish rituals (Sabbath, festivals, and commemorating the dead) proliferated, so also did the mention of candles in supernatural contexts. They are used in **incantations** (*Sefer Raziel*), divination, **exorcisms** (*Shoshan Yesod ha-Olam*), and magical defense. The **Zohar** (ca. 13th century) mentions a candle-gazing **meditation** technique. European Jews in the early modern era practiced a custom of measuring out a **cemetery** with thread, then using that thread to make candlewicks for the home. It was believed that the merit of the sainted dead buried there could be transferred to the household using the taper.

1. Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors*, 147, 255n.

Language: (לשון/*lashon*, שפה/*safah*). "Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). In contrast to contemporary thought concerning language, which holds that words are pale and inadequate symbols for the rich realities they try (but fail) to signify, Judaism has traditionally taught just the opposite—words *are* reality, the highest and most divine form to be found in the universe.

Often a text will speak of God “hewing” or “carving” the letters, as if they are physical artifacts. Words are constructive—language makes things happen. This is exemplified by the story of **Creation** found in Genesis, in which God creates the universe solely through speech-acts.[1]

Words, if correctly used, will manifest the latent divine power. Humans, having the same godly power of speech, can tap into this creative potential that exists in language. Because of this, Jewish esoteric teachings place special value on language as a vehicle of occult knowledge and power.[2] *SEE* HEBREW AND HEBREW ALPHABET; INCANTATIONS, SPELLS, AND ADJURATIONS; MAGIC; NAMES OF GOD; YETZIRAH, SEFER.

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 16–30.
2. Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, 45–61.

Law and the Paranormal: (הלכה/*Halakhah*). Jewish law has had, at different times and places in Jewish history, either an adversarial and ambivalent relationship with both **magic** and **mysticism**. The **Bible** itself seemingly forbids many magical, mantic, and spiritualist practices (see Ex. 22:18; and especially Deut. 18), while at the same time authorizes its own variety of divinatory techniques, such as oneiromancy, **incubation**, and sortilege via **Urim and Thummim**. Gideon Bohak usefully points out that most of the biblical prohibitions against **necromancers**, wizards, diviners, and magicians actually prohibit the practitioner, rather than the practice. While this has often been understood to be a blanket rule, for many readers, this has provided sufficient slippage—so long as the one enacting the *kesem* is not a professional *kosem* (magician), there is no explicit prohibition. This allows for thinking, such as can be found in SWORD OF MOSES., in which the author explicit condemns **witchcraft** before offering a laundry list of adjurations and spells.

The **Talmud** reconfirms many of these prohibitions in a way that also condemns the ritual act itself (Tos. Shab. 7, 8:4–12; Sanh. 67a–68b). Still, despite some controversy (M. Sanh. 10), Jewish legalists opened the door to the perpetuation of a variety of paranormal practices with their liberal attitude toward virtually any method for **healing** illness, as well as their willingness to recognize spiritual visitations, **omens**, and veridical **dreams** (Shab. 67a–b; Ber. 55b–57a).

In time, even as Jewish law continued to emphatically condemn the practice of **witchcraft**, it came to tolerate both **sorcery** and mediumism in various forms, so long as the person employing it is regarded as otherwise righteous: medical theurgy, **astrology**, and the **summoning** of and consulting with spirit guides,

such as an **Angel** or a **maggid**. In the case of one medieval legalist, the enslavement of **demons** for beneficent purposes is also permitted.

Repeated attempts are made in Halakhah to draw fine distinctions between licit and illicit paranormal practices and beliefs (the so-called ways of the Amorites) (Shab. 61a– b, 67a–b; Rashba, Teshuvah 408, 409, 413), but in the descriptions of the various practices preserved in Jewish texts, it is evident that the boundaries between the permitted and forbidden can become quite blurry. Many Hebrew magical manuals of late antiquity and the Middle Ages effectively ignore all rabbinic limits and prohibitions, or honor them only in the most tendentious fashion, as seen in the disclaimers against witchcraft in the archly magical text, *Sword of Moses*.[1]

Jewish law also attempts to place severe restrictions on how one engages in mystical pursuits, as well as limiting who may do so (Chag. 12a–b). Over time many of these strictures come to be disregarded. Still, in contrast to the magicians, Kabbalists have almost universally worked within the parameters of Jewish normative practice, and Jewish mysticism has sought to uphold and validate the value of Jewish tradition. This was especially the case in the medieval controversies over rationalist philosophy and how it threatened to undermine normative Jewish practice; mystics almost universally rallied to the defense of the traditionalists. Often Jewish mystics have taught and practiced at the boundaries of Jewish law, but rare is the example of a mystic who crossed over into full-blown rejection of all rules and norms of behavior—Shabbatai Tzvi and Jacob Frank being the two notable exceptions.

Jewish legal scholars certainly took seriously the reality of paranormal events. Meir of Lublin, in one of his legal opinions, entertained the question of whether a woman seduced by an incubus that appeared to her in a human form (but not the form of her husband) was guilty of adultery (he concluded she was not) (*Manhir Einei Chacham,* #116). The place where Jewish law asserts itself most emphatically is on the issue of new revelations or interpretations of the law itself. It rejects decisions that are derived from visions, angels, or heavenly voices (B.M. 59b). As striking is the legal standing of Sefer Zohar. Since it is widely regarded to be a product of a Talmudic sage, it should, in theory, serve as a source for legal interpretation on par with the **Midrash**, yet in practice this has not been the case. One may follow a practice or prescription found in the Zohar only if it does not fly in the face of established legal practice:

> The Knesset Ha-Gedulah wrote in his rules of authorities that anything on which Kabbalists and the Zohar disagree with the Talmud and codes, follow

> the Talmud and codes. However, if the Kabbalists are strict we should also be strict. But if it is not mentioned in the Talmud and codes we cannot force people to follow it even though it is mentioned in kabbalah. We should follow the words of kabbalah regarding a rule that is not contradicted by the Talmud and codes. And when authorities disagree, the words of kabbalah should decide. (*Mishnah Berurah* 25:42) [2]

Jewish legalists also almost universally refuse to recognize as valid any opinions or edicts that are credited to paranormal sources. Thus, for example, though a kabbalistic ceremony evolved in the 17th century for the ritual "**purification**" of a corpse prior to **burial** (*Taharah*), this act of purification did not in any way alter existing the Halakhah that a dead **Body** transmits *tumah*, or ritual impurity, to the living who touched it. Whatever the symbolic transformation of this performance, the corpse remained as impure after "purification" as it had been prior to the performance of the ritual.[3]

The major exception to this was a period of controversy among the medieval Rhineland Jews when Jacob of Marvege claimed to receive solutions to legal questions through angelic and dream revelations. Joseph Caro also may have drawn upon a paranormal authority to help him in writing his great legal opus, Beit Yosef, though the role of his personal **maggid** in this part of his writings is ambiguous.

Some later legal digests, such as the *Aruch ha-Shulchan* (ca. 19th century), actually go so far as to claim that certain practices derived from the Zohar and the teaching of **Isaac Luria** can take precedent over norms established by non-esoteric legal sources.[4] *SEE* KABBALAH; MAGIC; SHE' LOT CHALOM; SHE' LOT U-TESHUVOT MIN HA-SHAMAYIM; SORCERY

1. M. Fishbane, "Aspects of Jewish Magic in the Ancient Rabbinic Period," *The Solomon Goldman Lectures II*, N. Stampfer, ed. (Chicago: Spertus College of Judaica Press, 1987), 25–34. Also see Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 11, 708.
2. G. Student, "Halakhah, Kabbalah, and History." Torah Musings, 2012, http://www.torahmusings.com/2012/08/halakhah-kabbalah-and-history/.
3. Dennis, "Purity and Transformation," 26:1, 51–63.
4. M. Rosen, "The Interaction of Kabbalah and Halachah in the Aruch ha-Shulchan," *The Maqom Journal*, http://www.maqom.com/journal/paper22.pdf. Also see Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors*.

Lecanomancy: The art of divining by pouring oil on **water** and studying the patterns the oil forms on the surface. This is the practice alluded to by **Joseph** when he accuses his brothers of stealing his divining cup (Gen. 44:5, 15). This author could find no mention of it in the **Talmud** or early rabbinic literature, but

the practice resurfaces in other Jewish texts, such as Sefer ha-Razim and Geniza fragment T-S K 1.80, around the Mediterranean in late antiquity. **Chayyim Vital** describes consulting a **witch** who was an expert in "oil gazing" (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot* 5). A variation in this practice became a folk-custom during the ritual of Havdalah, during which practitioners attempted to get of glimpse of a future mate, angels, or **Elijah**.[1] *SEE* DIVINATION; OIL

1. H. Zafrani, *Two Thousand Years of Moroccan Jewish Life* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 2005), 235–236.

Lecha Dodi: (לכה דודי). "Come, my beloved …" A mystical liturgical poem composed by Solomon Alkabetz that is recited at the beginning of the **Sabbath** evening. Alkabetz was a contemporary of Moses Cordovero. An ecstatic mystic, he would pursue direct communion with dead sages and saints.

The poem personifies the Sabbath as a bride and queen, and is concerned foremost with the task of reuniting (*yichud*) the fragmented aspects of the **Godhead**, bringing the Shekhinah/Malchut out if its exile and ensuring its union with the masculine aspect, variously known as Yesod, Tiferet, or *ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu*. Shabbat is the most propitious time to affect this union, so this composition is recited at the cusp of sunset Friday at the beginning of Shabbat. Throughout the poem, there are feminine figures—the Sabbath bride, the widowed **Jerusalem**, even the Jewish people—that are stand-ins for the Shekhinah. As is the case with many mystical **Prayers**, Lecha Dodi is also an acrostic poem. In this case, the first Hebrew letter of each stanza combine to spell the author's name—a first in a long Jewish tradition of anonymous liturgical compositions:

> Come, my love, to meet the bride, let us welcome the Sabbath.
> "Observe" and "Remember" in a single utterance, the Unique God made known to us.
> God is one and His name is one, for renown, splendor, and praise.
>
> Come, let us go to meet the Sabbath, for She is the source of blessing [Shab. 119a].
> From the beginning, of old, it was ordained—[She is the] last in creation, [but] first in [God's] thought.
>
> Sanctuary of the king, the royal city—arise! Come forth from the ruins.
> Long enough have you [feminine] dwelt in the valley of sorrow—but He will show you mercy.
>
> Shake off your dust, arise! Put on your garments of splendor, my people.

Through the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite [the messiah], draw close to my soul and redeem her.

Awaken! Awaken! Your light has come! Arise and shine! [Isa. 51:16, 60:1]
Awake, awake, utter a song—the glory of the Lord is revealed on you.

Do not be ashamed or confused. Why are you downcast? Why do you moan?
In you my poor people will be sheltered—and the city will be rebuilt on its ancient site.

Those who despoiled you will become a spoil, and all who would devour you will be far away.
Your God will rejoice over you like a groom rejoices over his bride.

Spread out to the right and the left, and revere the Lord,
Through the coming of the son of Peretz we will be glad and exult.

Come in peace, crown of Her husband, with song, with joy, and with exultation.
Among the faithful ones of the chosen people, come, O bride, come, O bride.

The image of the Sabbath as a bride is characteristic of the erotic theology that undergirds much mystical thought. It has a biblical basis (Hos. 2:4; Isa. 54:5–8; S of S). In this case, the people **Israel** are the groom (see Gen. R. 11.8), but this nuptial metaphor is applied promiscuously (God and Israel, Israel and Shabbat, Shekhinah and Tiferet, etc.). There is also a **gematria** woven into some lines. For example, in the first line of the poem, the total number of letters is twenty-six, the numeric value of God's four-letter name, which encapsulates the masculine and feminine forces. The second line refers to the two versions of the **Ten Commandments** found in the **Torah** are interpreted to mean God spoke to Israel in such a way as we heard both versions simultaneous. It also plays upon the sexual associations of speech (think of the English word "intercourse") and knowledge (the Hebrew word *da'at* means both "know" and "copulate"). Left and right in the eighth stanza refers to the **sefirot**. In the messianic times (the "son of Perez" refers to the **Messiah**) both the "left and right sides" of God will be harmonized and the universe perfected.

Sexual and kabbalistic double entendres feature prominently in the poem. Thus in the ninth stanza, just as a **crown** receives and encircles the head, so the feminine receives the masculine in exultation and pleasure. The crown also designates the Shekhinah and the husband [*baalat*] refers to **Yesod**, the sefirotic equivalent of the **phallus**. *SEE* SABBATH QUEEN.

Lechishah: (לחשה). “Whispering/Murmuring,” “incantation.” A healing **incantation**. In the **Talmud**, Rabbi Akiba expressly condemns the use of spells whispered over a wound, but the prohibition didn’t take hold, even among the Sages (M. Sanh. 10; Shab. 67a–b). When the practice is questioned again in the Middle Ages, one authority prohibits only *lechishah* that involve invoking **demons**, but permits other forms of word spells that, for example, use verses from the **Bible**:

> It is prohibited to use incantations to control animals and for medicinal purposes except to avoid danger … it is permissible to use amulets for protection against injury or sickness … It is permissible to consult the spirits of the dead … dealings with demons should be avoided, as a matter of course … It is prohibited to practice magic or to learn from a magician. (SA Yoreh Deah 179)

SEE HEALING; LAW AND THE PARANORMAL.; MAGIC; SEGULAH Or Segulot; SORCERY

Left: (שמאל). The left side of the **sefirot** structure is the side of power and strict justice. It is also the female side, and represents the principles of separation and distinction. It signifies the fearsome awe of God. The unrestrained dominion of the left side gives rise to **evil**. The Sitra Achra, or “Other side” of the divine **emanations**, is the source of the demonic.

Thus, as in Christian tradition, the left can signify weakness, impurity, or evil. The **Zohar** emphasizes that certain **ritual** acts, like washing the **hands**, should begin with the right hand. Chasidic pious customs expand this to include always starting any bodily act, such as lacing one’s shoes or taking one’s first step, from the right side to avoid making oneself vulnerable to the impure powers of the left side. *SEE* FINGER; PURITY OR PURIFICATION; TREATISE ON THE LEFT EMANATION.

Leiliel: **Angel** of the **night** (I Enoch). *SEE* LAILAH.

Leprosy: (צרעת). Today leprosy is identified as Hansen’s Disease, a **disease** that causes the collapse of soft connective tissue and grotesque physical deformity. In the **Bible**, by contrast, *tzara’at* (“leprosy”) probably encompassed a whole range of disfiguring skin diseases along with Hansen’s. Any such leprosy was a sign from God, whether meant as a manifestation of power, like **Moses** turning his **hand** leprous at will (Ex. 4), or as a sign of divine displeasure, as in the cases of **Miriam** and King Uzziah (Num. 12; II Chron. 26). God miraculously cured the Aramean general Naaman of leprosy when Elisha instructs him to bathe in the Jordan (2 Kings 5).

According to **Midrash**, **Pharaoh** was afflicted with leprosy. He attempted to cure it by bathing in the **blood** of Israelite **children** (Ex. R. 1:23, 1:34). In one of the most unusual of Jewish **myths** about the **Messiah**, Leviticus Rabbah describes the Messiah as a leper who sits outside the gates of Rome, waiting for his time to come. While he waits, he only changes one bandage at a time, so that there will be no delay when the moment of his advent arrives.

The **Talmud** teaches that mixing meat and milk makes one susceptible to leprosy. Children born from having intercourse during **menstruation** will possibly be afflicted with leprosy (Lev. R. 15:5). An adept using the Book of the Great Name must not gaze upon a leper for forty days as an act of **purification**.

Letter of Rehoboam: A text of astrological medicine and **angelology**, probably written by a Hellenized Jew. **Solomon** is the purported author, and it is framed as a letter the great king wrote to his son, Rehoboam, explaining the benefits of gaining power through the use of "plants, **Prayers**, stones, but above all else … the seven planetary gods." In style, it fits very much with pagan works written in Greco-Roman times. The letter, divided into seven sections, explains the order of the **planets**, stars, and hours, and their relationship to the **Angels**and **demons**. It also lists **Prayers**, **incantations**, and offerings one can use to influence illness, to heal, and to shape other earthly events. In this regard, it resembles Sefer ha-Razim. While the document is superficially monotheistic, it speaks of "planetary gods" (angels?) and also has the unusual feature that most of the prayers and spells are addressed directly to the angelic beings and stars.[1] *SEE* ASTROLOGY; MAGIC; SORCERY; WITCHCRAFT.

1. Ness, *Astrology and Judaism in Late Antiquity*, chapter 4.

Levi: One of the twelve sons of **Jacob**. Eventually the tribe descended from him became the sacerdotal clan for all **Israel**; all **priests** and temple functionaries had to be Levites. Levi himself was especially chosen for this status—**Michael** brought Levi alive to the **Throne of Glory** and God blessed him and ordained the priestly role for his offspring (PdRE 37).

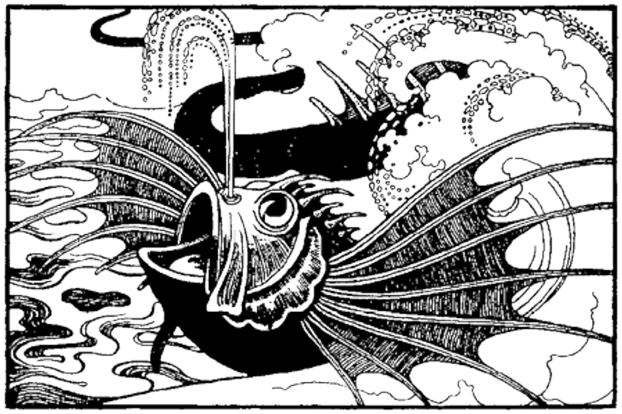
Though he is a minor and ambivalent figure in the Scriptures, Levi is given much more elaborate and loving treatment in **apocalyptic literature**, such as **I Enoch**, Jubilees, the **Testament of Levi**, and in the writings of the sectarian priests of **Qumran**, who regarded Levi to be their progenitor and the archetypal priest.

Levi, Testament of: A fragmentary apocalypse found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, probably composed in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, devoted to the centrality and elevation of Levi above his brothers. The work aims to affirm the central role of the **priesthood** in Early Judaism by projecting priestly authority back to the **Patriarchs**.

Leviathan: (לויתן/*Livyatan*). A cosmic sea monster, evidently based on Isaiah 27:1, "God created the great sea serpents," combined with the Canaanite **myth** of Lotan, a watery chaos dragon-monster. In Job, God reminds the long-suffering, angry **Job** of his humble place in the cosmos with an extended **meditation** on the mighty creature, itself a subordinate creation of God:

> Can you draw out Leviathan by a fishhook? … His strong scales are his pride, shut up as with a tight seal. One is so near to another that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another; they clasp each other and cannot be separated. His sneezes flash forth light, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go burning torches; sparks of fire leap forth. Out of his nostrils smoke goes forth as from a boiling pot and burning rushes. His breath kindles coals, and a flame goes forth from his mouth. In his neck lodges strength, and dismay leaps before him. The folds of his flesh are joined together, firm on him and immovable. His heart is as hard as a stone, even as hard as a lower millstone. When he raises himself up, the mighty fear; because of the crashing they are bewildered. The sword that reaches him cannot avail, nor the spear, the dart or the javelin … Nothing on earth is like him, one made without fear. He looks on everything that is high; he is king over all the sons of pride. (Job 40: 25–26, 41:15–32)

The Israelite Leviathan (or **Rahav**—there seems to be two names for this creature) may be a semi-tamed version of the terrible **chaos** monster mentioned in surrounding Pagan mythologies—Lotan, Prince Sea, or Tiamat. This **dragon** personifies chaos, disorder, and entropy. In most Pagan accounts, the gods must slay this primordial monster in order for cosmos, orderly existence, to become possible.



Sea monster by E. M. Lilien

The **Bible** reworks this **myth** in monotheistic terms. God contains chaos within this creature, subduing it. Chaos is not destroyed, but delimited. When God stops His part in the creative process, He declares the universe to be *tov meod*, "very good"—but not perfect. The world, according to this biblical myth, is orderly on many levels, but residual bits of chaos linger, most visibly in the realm of the moral. As Jon Levenson notes in his book on biblical myth, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, God's *Mishpat*, literally "justice" but with the connotation of "divine plan," is not yet fully realized. Humanity, God's cocreators, has a role in establishing mishpat at the societal level. Thus, in time, the cumulative result is that God will finally wipe away this last remnant of chaos in **Creation**:

> In that day the Lord will punish, with his great, cruel, mighty sword Leviathan the Elusive Serpent—Leviathan the Twisting Serpent; He will slay the dragon of the sea. (Isa. 27:1)

The **Talmud** amplifies and elaborates upon what is already found in the Bible. The Sages seize upon a seemingly incidental aspect of a biblical tradition to elevate and forefront it in remarkable ways. Since **Isaiah** uses two titles for Leviathan—"elusive serpent" and "twisting serpent" the **Talmud** takes this to mean there are actually two monsters. The bisexuality of the creatures reflects the worldview of the Sages, who see the universe as both sentient and permeated with male and female forces. In keeping with the notion that unifying males and female forces has cosmic consequences, once coupled these chaos monsters would undo creation and return it to primordial **darkness**. Therefore God ensures the survival of creation by keeping these forces apart.

In Baba Batra, biblical citations are used to construct its narrative of the final end of **Death**, chaos, entropy and **evil** personified by Leviathan, in the **World to Come**:

> Rav Judah said in the name of Rav: All that the Blessed Holy One created [in all] his world is male and female. Likewise, Leviathan the slant serpent and Leviathan the torturous serpent he created male and female; and had they mated with one another they would have destroyed the whole world. What [then] did the Blessed Holy One do? He castrated the male and killed the female preserving it in salt for the righteous in the World to Come; for it is written: “And he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.” And also Behemoth on a thousand hills was created male and female, and had they mated with one another they would have destroyed the whole world. What did the Blessed Holy One, do? He castrated the male and cooled the female and preserved it for the righteous for the World to Come; for it is written: “See now his strength is in his loins”—this refers to the male; “and his force is in the stays of his body,”—this refers to the female. There also, [in the case of Leviathan], he should have castrated the male and cooled the female [why then did he kill the female]? … [Because a] female [fish] preserved in salt is tastier … Then here also [in the case of Behemoth] he should have preserved the female in salt?—Salted fish is palatable, salted flesh is not. (74b)

This is one of several mythic accounts of how God will eventually subdue moral and human chaos in the End of Days. At the time of the **resurrection**, **Michael** and **Gabriel** will fight against Leviathan and overcome it. In other legends, Leviathan will fight a mortal battle with **Behemoth**. In the end, God will catch Leviathan and serve him as the entrée at the messianic banquet (Lev. R. 13:3; Gen. R. 7:4; Zohar I:46b; Zohar II:34b–35a).

When the final rectification comes, humanity will participate in perfecting the work of creation by literally “consuming” the chaos, both utterly dominating but also assimilating it into ourselves in a “nutritious” (rather than harmful) manner. This idea is derived from an enigmatic verse, Psalm 74:14, “… it was You who crushed the head of Leviathan, who made him **food** for the people of the desert.” Baba Batra continues:

> Rabbah said in the name of R. Johanan: The Blessed Holy One will in time to come make a banquet for the righteous from the flesh of Leviathan; for it is said: “Companions will make a banquet of it …” Companions must mean scholars, for it is said: “You that dwell in the gardens, the companions hearken for your voice; cause me to hear it …” Rabbah in the name of R. Johanan further stated: The Blessed Holy One will in time to come make a tabernacle for the righteous from the skin of Leviathan; for it is said: “Can

you fill tabernacles with his skin?" If a man is worthy, a tabernacle is made for him [in the World to Come]; if he is not worthy [of this] a [mere] covering is made for him, for it is said: And his head with a fish covering. If a man is [sufficiently] worthy a covering is made for him; if he is not worthy [even of this], a necklace is made for him, for it is said: "And necklaces about your neck." If he is worthy [of it] a necklace is made for him; if he is not worthy [even of this] an **amulet** is made for him; as it is said: "And you will bind him for your maidens." [The meaning of the Hebrew word for an amulet is "binder."] The rest [of the Leviathan hide] will be spread by the Blessed Holy One upon the walls of Jerusalem, and its splendor will shine from one end of the world to the other; as it is said: "And nations shall walk at your light, and kings at the brightness of your rising." (74b)

Sefer Raziel sees Leviathan as the animating spirit of the waters, the "genius" of the **abyss** that dwells at the center of the sea. Leviathan is a beautiful, if volatile, creature. He is what causes rolling seas. It takes the entire Jordan to quench the thirst of the monster.

God hung the world from Leviathan's tail. Leviathan may have fathered some heavenly creatures of his own. Such as *Hamnuna* Sava. *SEE* ANIMALS.; DRAGON; SERPENT.

Levirate Marriage: In the **Bible**, it is mandated that if a man dies childless, his brother must marry his widow and cohabit with her long enough to bear a son, who would then be designated the son and heir of the dead man. This served to ensure that no man's name and lineage would be lost in **Israel**.

This admittedly odd custom has puzzled generations of Jews in post-biblical times, and eventually the Sages enacted rules to end the practical application of this **commandment** (Ket.). Mystics, however, found occult meaning in the law concerning **reincarnation**; they believe the levirate marriage allows the **soul** of the dead man another incarnation (*Sefer ha-Gilgulim*).

Levush: (לבוש). "Garment." A vessel for a supernal entity or a container for the **soul**; a membrane that mediates between the spiritual soul and the physical **Body** (*Kelach Pitchei Chochmah*). It is detectable at the wrist pulse and can be used in making a spiritual diagnosis (*Sha'ar ha-Yichudim* 16a). Angels are garbed in *levushim*, a material form, when entering into the lower worlds. Tanya argues that **study** of **Torah** provides the soul with the necessary "cover" to be able to interact with the **Shekhinah** (7a). Elsewhere it speaks of three human levushim: thought, speech, and action (1:1–13). *SEE* GUF HA-DAK.

Life of Adam and Eve, the: An apocryphal text that gives an account of the fall of **Satan**.

Light: (אור). Light is an archetypal symbol of divinity, enlightenment, and the good across cultures. It is the attribute of both divinity and human experience of gnosis that comes from divinity. Light is the first of God's creations and, as the Ma'asei-Bereshit recognizes, it is also the first occult phenomena. It is so because the Talmudic Sages note that God created light on the first day, but had not yet created the **sun**, **moon**, and stars (the sources of visible, terrestrial light), which were created on the fourth. From this they conclude that there is a primordial, supernal light, which God has hidden away. From other passages in the **Bible** (specifically Job 38:15 and Psalm 97:11),they come to believe that access to this first light is a special reward for the **Righteous** (Chag. 12a; Gen. R. 3:6, 41:3; Ex. R. 35:1). Those who have experienced such illumination may even be regarded as a human source of it, as exemplified by Shimon bar Yochai, who is called the "holy lamp."

These insights help define the logic of Jewish occultism (there is a concealed higher reality that is different from the "reality" we experience day-to-day). It also initiates the Jewish quest to know this higher light and thereby become "enlightened." For supernal light allows "one to see from one end of the universe to the other," achieving total gnosis (Chag. 12a–13b).

Certain artifacts of this light are present with us that we can use in this quest. The most obvious, the one God intends us to use, is **Torah** (Prov. 6:23; Bahir 149). Torah began its supernal existence as "black fire written upon white fire" (Tanh. Bereshit 1).

The **Temple**, properly configured and maintained with the right **rituals**, also emanates that divine light into the world. **Angels**exist in a medium of this divine light and are therefore a resource for the mystic seeking to experience it.

Ezra of Gerona taught that doing the **commandments** creates more supernal light and draws the one who performs the *mitzvah* into the **Shekhinah** (*Commentary on Song of Songs)*. *Sefer Yetzirah*, the first mystical text to mention the sefirot, also immediately associates light with them (1.8). Lurianic theosophy teaches that sparks of this light are encased and trapped in the "husks" of ordinary reality and it is the human task to release those sparks through performing the **commandments**. *SEE* CANDLE; FIRE; KELIPOT; LAMP; NITZOTZ; TZOHAR.

Likkutim, Sefer ha-: One of **Chayyim Vital** 's works on the teachings of **Isaac Luria**, expounding Lurianic cosmogony on the breaking of the vessels, the fallen sparks, and how to achieve cosmic repair. *SEE* NITZOTZ; TIKKUN.

Lilin: (לילין). An alternative term for "lilot," aerial **night** spirits (Eruv. 18b). Lilin are bald but have **hair** covering the rest of their faces and bodies (*Emek ha-Melech* 140b). *SEE* LILITH.

Lilith: (לילית/*Lilit*). "Night [Demon]." Now regarded in Jewish lore to be the most prominent of the four queens of demons, the nature of Lilith has undergone many reinterpretations throughout Jewish history. The origins of Lilith are probably found in the Mesopotamian *lilu*, or "aerial spirit." Some features of Lilith in Jewish tradition also resemble those of Lamashtu, a Babylonian demoness who causes infant death. There is one mention of *lilot* (pl.) in the **Bible** (Isa. 34:14), but references to Lilith demons only become common in post-biblical Jewish sources. Furthermore, the characterization of Lilith as a named demonic personality really only begins late in antiquity. The **Dead Sea Scrolls** (Song of the Sage 4Q510–11), speak of *lilot* as a class of demonic beings:

> And I the Sage declare the grandeur of His radiance in order to frighten and terri[fy] all the spirits and ravaging angels and the bastard spirits, demons, liliths, owls and [jackals] and those who strike unexpectedly … [1]

This assumption of multiple lilot is replicated in **amulet**s and magical formulae well into the medieval period. Even the gender of the creature is not fixed. **incantation bowls**, for example, explicitly protect against "*lilot*, whether male or female …"

In time, what eventually emerges from these biblical and medicinal-magical traditions is three overlapping interpretations of Lilith: the *etiological* Lilith, a spirit that accounts for certain common but puzzling human physical processes —**Death** in **childbirth**, sudden infant death, and male nocturnal emissions; the *midrashic* Lilith, a creature born out of the medieval interpretation of problematic biblical passages; and the *cosmic* Lilith, an entity described in esoteric texts that personifies the existence of **evil** in the divine order.

Jewish tradition gradually fixes on Lilith as a female demon. In **Talmud** and **Midrash**, she is described as a demon with a woman's face, long **hair**, and wings (Nid. 24b; Eruv. 100b). She is a **succubus** , seducing men in their **sleep** and then collecting their nocturnal emissions in order to breed demonic offspring (Shab. 151b; Gen. R. 18:14). Later commentaries on the Talmud explain Lilith

does this because her consort, **Samael**, has been castrated by God. She has many demonic **children**, the most famous being Ormuzd (B.B. 73b). In amulet **incantations** contemporary to the Talmud, she is addressed as a demon that preys on **women** in childbirth and as the spirit of infanticide, the killer of children, a theme that become more prominent in medieval sources (Zohar I:148a–b; Zohar II:267b).

The use of "Lilith" as the proper name of a specific demonic personality first gets solidified in the Midrash. The most famous legend of Lilith is the one first appearing in the medieval satirical text Alef-Bet of Ben Sira. In that document, Lilith is identified as the first woman God created along with **Adam**. The case for there having been two **women** in the **Garden of Eden** is based on the two disparate accounts of the creation of woman that appear in Genesis (Gen. 1:27 versus Gen. 2:18–23):

> He created a woman for Adam, from the earth, as He had created Adam himself, and called her Lilith. Adam and Lilith began to fight. She said, "I will not lie below," and he said, "I will not lie beneath you, but only on top. For you are fit only to be in the bottom position, while am to be in the superior one." Lilith responded, "We are equal to each other inasmuch as we were both created from the earth." But they would not listen to one another. When Lilith saw this, she pronounced the Ineffable Name and flew away into the air. Adam stood in prayer before his Creator: "Sovereign of the universe!" he said, "The woman you gave me has run away." At once, the Holy One, blessed be He, sent these three angels to bring her back.
>
> Said the Holy One to Adam, "If she agrees to come back, fine. If not she must permit one hundred of her children to die every day." The angels left God and pursued Lilith, whom they overtook in the midst of the sea, in the mighty waters wherein the Egyptians were destined to drown. They told her God's word, but she did not wish to return. The angels said, "We shall drown you in the sea."
>
> "Leave me!" she said. "I was created only to cause sickness to infants. If the infant is male, I have dominion over him for eight days after his birth, and if female, for twenty days."
>
> When the angels heard Lilith's words, they insisted she go back. But she swore to them by the name of the living and eternal God: "Whenever I see you or your names or your forms in an amulet, I will have no power over that infant." She also agreed to have one hundred of her children die every day. Accordingly, every day one hundred demons perish, and for the same reason,

> we write the angels' names on the amulets of young children. When Lilith sees their names, she remembers her oath, and the child recovers.[2]

This account, incidentally, is a Jewish variation of a story about a demon curbed by three pursuers that also appears in Greek, Coptic, Arabic, Armenian, and Slavonic legends. This midrashic version of Lilith's origins proves to have only a minor influence of traditional Jewish thinking, eventually getting integrated into amulets as part of the etiological tradition in Sefer Raziel, but only really achieving wide-spread circulation in the modern era, with the printed re-publication of ABBS.

Lilith appears in a third and very different incarnation in the highly influential Treatise of the Left Emanation, written in the 13th century by the Kabbalist Isaac Cohen, where she is portrayed as the evil antipode to **Eve**, and the female personification of cosmic **evil**, the consort and mother of princely demons:

> [I]t is made clear that Samael and Lilith were born as one, similar to the form of Adam and Eve who were also born as one, reflecting what is above. This is the account of Lilith which was received by the Sages in the Secret Knowledge of the Palaces. The Matron Lilith is the mate of Samael. Both of them were born at the same hour in the image of Adam and Eve, intertwined in each other … You already know that evil Samael and wicked Lilith are like a sexual pair who, by means of an intermediary, receive an evil and wicked emanation from one and emanate to the other … The heavenly serpent is a blind prince, the image of an intermediary between Samael and Lilith. Its name is Tanin'iver. The masters of tradition said that just as this serpent slithers without eyes, so the supernal serpent has the image of a spiritual form without color—these are "the eyes." The traditionalists call it an eyeless creature, therefore its name is Tanin'iver. He is the bond, the accompaniment, and the union between Samael and Lilith. If he were created whole in the fullness of his emanation he would have destroyed the world in an instant.[3]

Lilith has a mount she rides, Tanin'iver, "blind dragon." She can command hundreds of legions of demons. Intriguingly, the *Treatise of the Left Emanation* starts to come full circle, once again referring to multiple Liliths, as did the ancients. This tradition of there being two (or more) Liliths also appears in Pardes Rimmonim, and becomes a commonplace part of kabbalistic cosmology in 17th- and 18th-century works.

This interpretation of Lilith, as the female face of cosmic evil, also occupies a significant place in the **Zohar**, where she is the evil counterpart of the

Shekhinah (II: 118a–b; III: 97a). There is also a tradition in the Zohar that Lilith was the Queen of Sheba who came to test **Solomon**.

In other, later mystic texts, she is one of the four queens, or the four mothers, of demons. She is the most prominent of the four, being queen of the forces of Sitra Achra, the impure, or left side of divine **emanations**, which run loose in the world. In the early modern Kabbalistic text, Emek ha-Melech, the three interpretations of Lilith put forth in earlier literatures are reconciled:

> And all this ruination came about because Adam the first man coupled with Eve while she was in her menstrual impurity—this is the filth and the impure seed of the Serpent who mounted Eve before Adam mounted her … Behold, here it is before you: because of the sins of Adam the first man all the things mentioned came into being. For Evil Lilith, when she saw the greatness of his corruption, became strong in her husks, and came to Adam against his will, and became hot from him and bore him many demons and spirits and lilin (23b–d) … Samael is called the Slant Serpent, and Lilith is called the Tortuous Serpent (Isa 27:1). She seduces men to go in tortuous ways … And know that Lilith too will be killed. For the groomsman [Blind Dragon] who was between her and her husband [Samael] will swallow a lethal potion at a future time, from the hands of the Prince of Power. For then, when he rises up, Gabriel and Michael will join forces to subdue and bring low the government of evil which will be in heaven and earth. (84d) [4]

Defenses against Lilith include providing amulets inscribed with the angelic names Sanoi, Sansanoi, and Samnaglof (or **Sandalfon**) (*Sefer Raziel*, Illustration) to **women** in childbirth and to newborns, not sleeping alone in a house, and tapping an infant on the nose if he appears to be responding to something the parent cannot see. **psalms**, particularly Psalms 16, 91, 121, and 126, are effective in driving off Lilith (*Shimmush Tehillim,* 121, 126). There is also a ritual that can be performed during and after intercourse to drive her away (Zohar III:19). German Jews of the 18th century had a more elaborate ritual, involving the new mother sleeping with a sword, dagger, or sword-shaped charm under her pillow and arising each night for the first thirty-one nights to slash the air around the bed (assuming the child slept in the bed with her) to fend off the threat.[5]



Lilith as portrayed on a metal amulet

In modern times, inspired by the singular *Ben Sira* portrayal of her as a woman who stands up to male domination, Lilith has become a rallying point among feminists in critiquing the overwhelmingly male-oriented perspective of traditional Judaism, and she has been adopted as a symbol of feminist resistance to male spiritual hegemony.[6]

It should be pointed out, however, that modern claims that Lilith was an early Hebrew goddess later censored out of the tradition by the authors of the Scriptures has no basis whatsoever in the historical record. This claim appears to depend entirely on appealing to the Ben Sira narrative, but that story is *sui generis*, and there is no precedent for any belief in Lilith as either "Wife of Adam" or "Wife of YHVH" prior to the 10th century CE.[7]

1. Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 371, 373.
2. D. Stern and M. Mirsky, *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 182–183.
3. Dan, *Early Kabbalah*, 175, 179.
4. Patai, *Gates to the Old City*, 458.
5. Sperber, *The Jewish Life Cycle*, 26–27.
6. Aviva Cantor Zuckoff, "The Lilith Question" *Lilith Magazine Online*, http://www.lilith.org/about.thm.
7. G. Dennis and A. Dennis, "Vampires and Witches and Commandos, Oy Vey: Comic Book Appropriations of Lilith" *Shofar*, 32:3 (2014).

Lion: (אריה/*Aryeh*). Lions are a symbol of the tribe of Judah and therefore appear frequently in Jewish iconography. In the **Midrash**, **Solomon** has a whole pride of lions that surround his throne and serve him. Aryeh is one of the houses of the Jewish **zodiac**, the equivalent of Leo. Lion's **blood** is a useful *materia magica* in potions for controlling powerful people (*Sefer ha-Razim*).

Lippold: Mint master of Brandenburg (German, ca. 16th century). This court Jew was prosecuted for **witchcraft** and confessed under torture to consorting with the devil, shape changing, and injuring his enemies through magical attack. He later recanted, but again admitted the charges under renewed torture. Finally offered the chance to live as a Christian, in the end he insisted on dying a faithful Jew.

Loew, Judah: *SEE* JUDAH LOEW BEN BEZALEL (THE MAHARAL).

Lost Books: In various places in Jewish literature, existing books will cite other books we no longer possess, books that have been lost to history. The **Bible**, for example, mentions *Sefer ha-Brit*, *Sefer ha-Yashar*, Sefer Milchamot Adonai, *Sefer Shmuel ha-Roeh*, and Sefer Refuot as books that would be familiar to ancient readers. **Solomon** reportedly composed thirteen books, but today we have only the three Scriptural books that tradition credits to him (**Song of Songs**, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes).

Alongside these, other books, books of **secret** knowledge, were identified. The tradition that there is a primordial book of power known to the worthies of the past appears multiple times in two overlapping Jewish traditions, the "Book of Adam" and the "Book of Noah."

The biblical basis is Genesis 5:1, "This is the book of the generations of **Adam** …," assumed to refer to a book distinct from Genesis, which contains a genealogy of all the human generations that will ever exist.

It starts with the teaching that God showed Adam all the generations:

> [T]hat is what Resh Lakish meant when he said: What is the meaning of the verse, "This is the book of the generations of Adam?" It is to intimate that the Holy Blessed One, showed him [Adam] every generation and its thinkers, every generation and its sages. When he came to the generation of Rabbi Akiba, he [Adam] rejoiced at his learning but was grieved at his death, and said: How weighty are Your companions to me, O God. (Sanh. 38b)

Elsewhere in the **Talmud**, it is made explicit that the generations actually exist in book form:

> And in that day the deaf hear the words of a book (Isa. 24:18) [this refers to] the book of the generations of Adam. (Gen. R. 24:1)

The belief that the book not only contains the names of all the generations but also has some **healing** powers probably got its start in this passage, where a

physician consults it, though as the perceptive reader will see, **Samuel** does so only to determine his destiny, not his course of treatment:

> Samuel Yarhinaah was Rabbi's physician. Now, Rabbi contracted an eye disease and Samuel offered to soak it with a lotion, but he said, "I cannot bear it." "Then I will apply an ointment to it," he said. "This too I cannot bear," he objected [even to this]. So he placed a poultice of medicines under his pillow, and he was healed. Rabbi was most anxious to ordain him, but there was no opportunity. "Don't you be grieved," he said; "I have seen the Book of Adam, in which is written, 'Samuel Yarhinaah shall be called "wise," but not "Rabbi",' but Rabbi's healing shall come through him." (B.M. 85b–86a)

References to a "Book of Noah" first appear in the Apocryphal books **I Enoch** (6–11, 39:1–2a, 54:7–55:2, 60, 65:1–69:25, and 106–107 are ascribed to the "Book of Noah") and the Book of Jubilees 10:13 and 21:10. Fragments of a self-styled Book of Noah have been found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls** (1QNoah or 1Q19 and 4Q534).

Later medieval magico-medical books such as Sefer Asaf ha-Rofe claim the Book of Noah as their source material. The **Zohar** in particular lists a small library of such books, citing **wisdom** from *Sefer Adam*, *Sefer Rav Hamnuna Sava*, *Sefer Rav Yeiva Sava*, and *Sefer Yeisa Sava*.

Lost Rituals: Over the course of 3,500 years, certain **rituals** and holidays have passed out of Jewish practice, and occasional, out of Jewish **memory**, though observances rarely go away forever. Examples of rituals which have fallen out of use or the original observance has been forgotten include:

> *The New Moon:* This occasion is marked in **synagogues** with a prayer to this day. The original biblical celebration, however, which enjoyed a status equal to that of the Sabbath (Hos. 2:11; 2 Kings 4:23; Isa. 1:13, 66:23; I Chron. 23:31; Neh. 10:33), is now unknown.
>
> *The Festival of Wood Offering:* A holiday mentioned in the Temple Scroll of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, was apparently observed on a **solar calendar** and evidently performed several times a year. The biblical basis for it once having existed, though (Neh. 10:34–40). The largely defunct annual Rabbinic observance of Tu B'Av may be a cognate or competing version of the **Qumran** custom.
>
> *Simchat Beit Hashoeva*, "Water Libation," connected to the Water Drawing Ceremony: The theurgic purpose of the ritual was to draw the underground

waters of the **abyss** toward the surface of the **Earth**, to trigger the fructifying mingling of tellurian and heavenly waters to trigger growth in the coming season. Today some communities hang on to the celebration aspect of the ritual with concerts, dancing, or events, but the actual ceremony is known only in outline.

Festival of the First Oil: Another holiday no longer part of the Jewish calendar but mentioned in the Temple Scroll. It may have its basis in the biblical list of priestly privileges (Num. 18:12–13; Neh. 10:34–40). It is not known whether the holiday was actually ever observed outside the circle of the Dead Sea Scrolls community.

Lot, Wife of: Curiously, the wife of Lot, who was turned to **salt** in Genesis 19, is invoked in love formulae in the Greek magical papyri corpus (*PGM* XXXVI 295–311).

Lots: (גורלות/*Goralot*, also *Purim*). The drawing of lots to uncover occult information or receive divine direction occurs several times in the **Bible**. **Aaron** casts lots over the two **goats** brought for the **Yom Kippur** offering to determine which will be the scapegoat (Lev. 16). Lots are used to divvy up the **Land of Israel** between the tribes (Num. 26; Josh. 15–19). While the passage is vague, Joshua apparently used either lots or the **Urim and Thummim** to determine who sinned against God by taking pillage from Jericho (Josh. 7). **Saul** is identified as God's appointed king by means of lots (1 Sam. 10). Seamen on the ship that was carrying Jonah used lots to identify him as the source of God's wrath toward them (Jon. 1:6). In the story of Purim, **Haman** uses lots to determine the most propitious day to attack and annihilate the Jews (Esth. 3).

Rabbinic literature assumes many more biblical decisions, though not explicitly stated in the text, were achieved by drawing lots (Sanh. 43b; J. Sanh. 19c; Gen. R. 84). The **Talmud** reports lots were used extensively by the **priests** and Levites in the **Temple** in their decision-making, though these were not usually esoteric matters. Nonetheless, the underpinning assumption in many cases is that these decisions were being given over to divine will (Yoma 37a, 39a–41a, 62a–63b, 65b; Zeb. 113b; Men. 59b; Ker. 28a). Issues of inheritance were resolved by such draws (B.B. 106b). The use of lots for divinatory purposes faded away in post-biblical Judaism only in the modern era, and there are innumerable reports of different Jewish ethnic groups using lots (or dice) in a variety of decision-making settings.[1] *SEE* DIVINATION; ORDEAL; SORTES/SORTILEGE.

1. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*.

Love: (אהבה/*Ahavah,* also *Chesed; Yedidut; Chaviv*). To be loved is a universal human need. The first reference to an aphrodisiac may appear in the **Torah** itself. In Genesis 30:14, we read of the love-deprived Leah gathering some things called דוראים. As it turned out, they worked for her, though not in the expected fashion. Now we translate this term as "mandrake," a root with long sexual associations, but the word itself is evidently derived from the verb דוד, "to love." So it could easily mean, "love root" or even "love potion." Unfortunately, the only other use of the word, in **Song of Songs** 7:14, doesn't really resolve the ambiguity.

For Jewish magicians post-biblically, love really can come in a bottle. A variety of love potions and love-inducing **amulets** are documented in medieval Jewish literature.[1] One example involves a **magic squares** with angelic names written on a shell (it is unclear whether an egg shell, turtle shell, or sea shell is meant) with ink made of spices, using a bronze or copper instrument. Several love **incantations** involve casting a spell inscribed on **metal** or clay into a fire, using the flames as a magic analogy for burning passion: "just as this potshard burns, so may burn the heart of …" *SEE* BRIDE OF GOD; CARO, GENIZA; EROTIC THEOLOGY; RAZIM, SEFER HA-; SEX; SWORD OF MOSES.

1. Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 150, 177, 199. Also see Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, 113.

Lulav: (לולב). Part of the bouquet of plants that are ritually waved during **Sukkot**. *SEE* FOUR SPECIES.

Luria, Isaac: Mystic (Egyptian, 1534–1572). He was also known as *ha-Ari* (The [Holy] Lion) and *ha-Ashkenazi* (The German—his family moved to the Middle East from Europe). Luria was one of the most influential men in the history of Jewish **mysticism**; his teachings shaped the thinking of generations of Kabbalists, triggered at least one messianic movement, and serve as intellectual foundation for much of **Chasidism**.

Luria's family came from Europe and first settled in **Egypt**. As an adult, Luria migrated to Safed in **Israel**, the epicenter of Jewish mystical studies in the 15th and 16th centuries, in order to **study** with Moses Cordovero.

He taught a highly original mystical theosophy, one that diverges dramatically from the Zohar-based **Kabbalah** taught by his predecessors, especially Cordovero. His Gnostic retelling of the **Creation myth** served as the center point of his metaphysics. His innovative teachings include the doctrines of

tzimtzum (divine self-contraction), *Shevirat ha-Kelim* (the breaking of the vessels), **nitzotzot** (divine sparks), **kelipot** (husks of evil), **Tikkun** (cosmic restoration), and gilgul (**reincarnation**).[1]

He taught an equally original form of ecstatic Kabbalah, centered on therapeutic "readings" of the spiritual condition of a **soul** and then offering spiritual direction. He also worked with dead souls. He would **sleep** on graves in order to commune with the dead spirits of Jewish saints buried there. His method of Yichudim, including a form of incubation, linked necromantic **divination** with his efforts to mend the cosmic imbalances in the universe. He furthered this effort by performing *tikkun* on impure spirits, exorcizing them and thereby returning them to the proper path toward the afterlife.[2]

Huge numbers of stories and legends about his personality and his occult powers have been recorded. Some believed he was a reincarnation of Simon bar Yochai. He could make himself invisible to the spiritually immature. On the other hand, those with the right spiritual capacity saw that a **pillar** of **fire**, extending up to **heaven**, was constantly hovering over his head. Luria had the power of a sixth sense—he could immediately determine the spiritual state of a person by studying the lines on their forehead. He also had power over angels and made them do his bidding. He healed the sick and granted extended life.

Given all these powers, it is ironic that Luria himself died young. He left behind many disciples, chief of whom was **Chayyim Vital**. Luria himself wrote very little about his mystical ideas, but his disciples produced numerous (sometimes contradictory) works devoted to his life and his teachings. Much of this material is also embellished with legendary material, and despite a wealth of details, many aspects of his life still remain a mystery.

Major works written by his students that provide insights into his esoteric teachings include *Shivhei ha-Ari*, *Etz ha-Chayyim*, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, and *Sefer Limmudei Atzilut.*

The influence of Luria on Jewish mysticism is hard to overestimate. Only Akiba and Moses de Leon may be his equal in the history of Jewish mysticism. His mystical interpretations have colored the way all earlier Kabbalistic texts are read. His ideas have been incorporated into both traditional and modernist Jewish philosophies and into authoritative **Prayer** books. He is the spiritual godfather of Chasidism. *SEE* IBBUR; INCUBATION; METOPOSCOPY.

1. M. Miller, "Rabbi Yitzchak Luria: Basic Kabbala Teachings," http://www.ascentofsafed.com/cgi-bin/ascent.cgi?Name=ari-teachings.

2. Fine, "The Contemplative Practice of Yihudim in Lurianic Kabbalah," 64–98.

Luz: (לוז). There are two distinct meanings to this term:

The first meaning is for the city of Luz. The ancient name for Beit El, was a city "painted blue" (signifying it is a gateway to **heaven**). In Jewish mythic tradition, Luz is the city of immortality. The Angel of Death cannot reach anyone who gained entry there, so long as they remain within the city walls (Gen. 28:19, 35:6, 48:3; Josh. 16:2, 18:13; Judg. 1:23; Sot. 46b; Gen. R. 69:8).

The second meaning was based on Psalm 34:21, the Rabbis teach that there is one indestructible **bone** in the **Body** called the "luz," around which God will resurrect every person (Eccl. R. 12:5; Lev. R. 18:1; Ber. 28a). It is the "nineteenth" vertebrae, making the spine to correspond to the nineteen blessings of the daily **Prayer**. *SEE* ANGEL OF DEATH; RESURRECTION.

Luzzato, Moses Chayyim: Ethicalist and Kabbalist (Italian, ca. 18th century). He was regularly visited by a **maggid**, which he summoned by **Torah** to him and his circle.

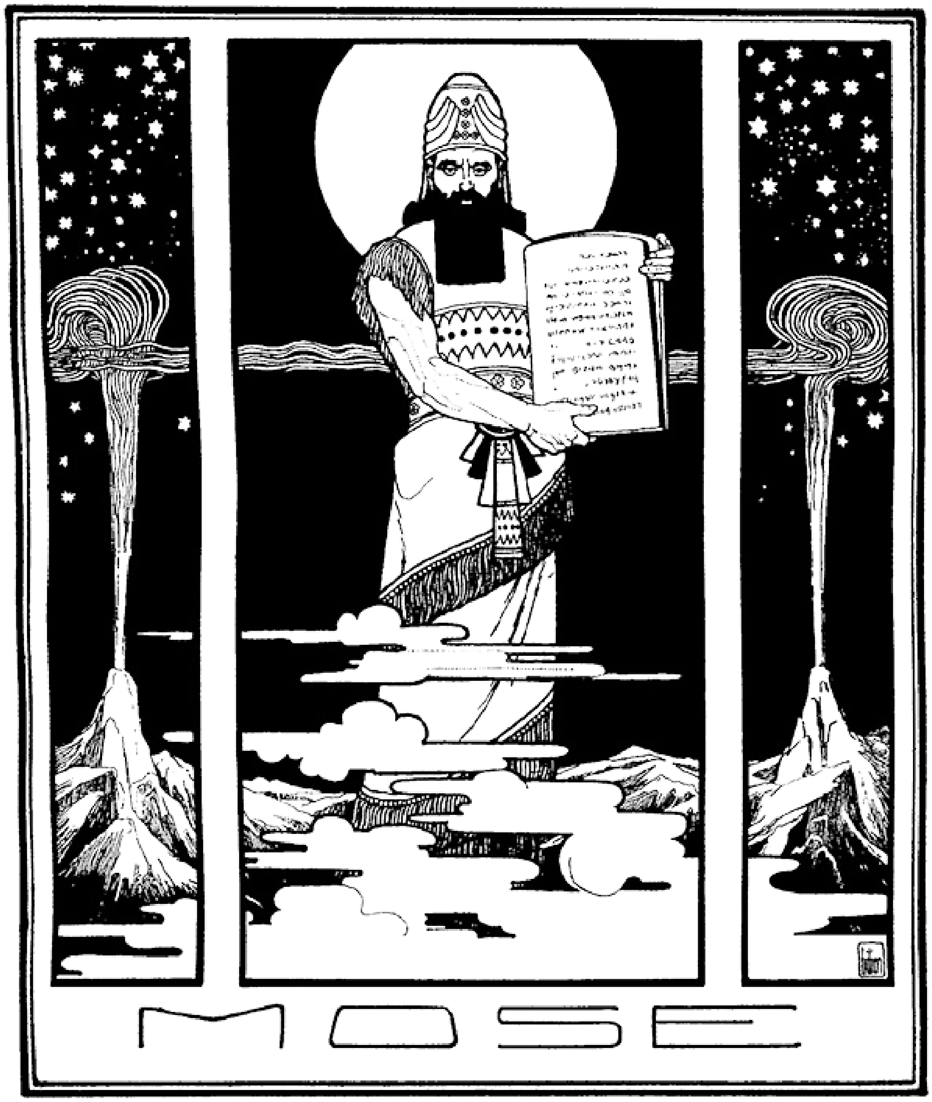
He may have believed he was the **reincarnation** of **Moses's**, which explains why he declared that his **marriage**, to a woman named **Zipporah** (corresponding to the name of the wife of the biblical **Moses**), signaled a mending of a cosmic disruption between the masculine and feminine sides of the **Godhead**. His claims to mystical revelations and his belief that he had a role to play in an unfolding messianic drama were controversial, and numerous rabbis suspected him of being a **secret** follower of Shabbatai Tzvi. He moved several times to escape this controversy, but it always followed him. He died in **Israel** at a young age.

Aside from his famed work of ethics, Mesillat Yesharim—mystics in Judaism seem particularly attuned to issues of daily morality—he is the author of several mystical works, most of them written under the guidance of his maggid: Kelach Pitchei Chochmah, *Tikkunin Chadashim*, and *Zohar Tinyana.1*

1. Dan, *The Heart and the Fountain*, 223–30. Also see Jacobs, *The Jewish Mystics*, 167–68.

[contents]

M



Ma’aseh: (מעשה). “Deed/Ritual.” There are many meanings that can be assigned to the word *ma’aseh*, including a “fabulous tale” and a theurgic “act of power” (ShR; Tan. 19a; Gen. R. 5:5). *SEE* MAGIC; MASHIVA; RITUAL; THEURGY.

Ma’aseh Book: (*Meisa Buch*). A medieval compendium of Jewish legends. Most of the stories are derived from Talmudic/rabbinic sources, but with fabulous elaborations. It also includes supernatural stories of medieval worthies.

Ma’aseh Merkavah: (מעשי מרכבה). “Workings of the Chariot.” The modern name given a **Hechalot** text, discovered by scholar Gershom Scholem, devoted to achieving **ascent** into **heaven** and the **summoning** of **angels**, particularly the Sar

ha-Torah. It is a kind of anthology, with Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph and Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha ha-Kohen serving as the central teachers.[1]

1. For a modern translation, see Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent*.

Ma'aseh Nissim: "Tales of Nissim." A 16th-century collection of folk and fantastic tales set in the city of Worms written by Jeptha Yozpa ben Naphtali.

Ma'aseh Yerushalmi: "Tale of the Jerusalemite." An influential 13th-century romance and fantastic tale of a man who marries a demoness, goes to live in the underworld, and then dies at her hands when he rejects his infernal bride.

Ma'asei-Bereshit: (מעשה בראשית). "The Working of Creation." Starting in antiquity, Jewish disciples of the esoteric have engaged in metaphysical speculation about the powers and events surrounding the creation of the universe (Chag. 12a–14b). This branch of Jewish occult knowledge is called *Ma'asei-Bereshit* (MB). The Mishnah explicitly cautions against pursuing questions of what preceded Creation (Chag. 2:1, 11b), though the restrictions they impose on learning MB are slightly less stringent than those surrounding inquiring into the other branch of Jewish esotericism, the Ma'asei-Merkavah. The issues surrounding these prohibitions are explored in more detail in the Gemara to the Mishnah, Chagigah 12a–14b. Despite this, the Talmudic Rabbis prove to be so vague about the exact nature of this field of inquiry, the term ma'asei-bereshit has been applied to wildly different intellectual disciplines. The rationalist philosopher Maimonides claimed the term MB really refers to the study of Aristotelian physics, but Kabbalists universally regard it to be a branch of esoteric metaphysics.

Despite the Talmudic prohibition, or perhaps because of it, such speculation flourished. The tract Sefer **Yetzirah**is clearly the major work of MB and its influence is so significant that over eighty commentaries on it—philosophical, mystical, and magical—presently exist. Presumably, more were written that have not survived down to the modern era. The ideas of Sefer Yetzirah figure in almost all later Jewish mystical cosmogony. There are a few other works that can be subsumed under this term, like Seder Rabbah d'Bereshit (also known as Baraita de Ma'aseh Bereshit) and the cosmogonic ideas of the Lurianic Creation **myth**. Both qualify as a kind of *Ma'asei-Bereshit*, though they are rarely referred to as such. *SEE* BREAKING OF THE VESSELS; CREATION; HEBREW AND HEBREW ALPHABET; TZIMTZUM.

Ma’asei-Merkavah: (מעשה מרכבה). “Working of the [Divine] Chariot.” A stream of Jewish mystical tradition extending from Classical Antiquity into the Middle Ages, though its influence goes far beyond that. Using **Ezekiel's** vision of the divine **chariot** and **Isaiah's** enthronement vision as their primary inspiration (Ezek. 1, 10; Isa. 6), the Merkavah mystics combined **Torah** study, **purification** rituals, and meditative practices to obtain **visions** of the heavenly principalities, the **angels**, and God. People in the Merkavah circles also engaged in the **summoning** of angels who would serve the adept in his (Merkavah mystics appear to have all been men) quest for revelation, protection, and personal benefit.[1] The **Hechalot**literature provides the major documentary record of this mystical school, though remarks recorded in the **Talmud** and by later medieval authorities slightly supplement our knowledge of their beliefs and activities.

The ideology of the Merkavah mystics likely has roots in the priestly spirituality of the **Temple**, with its preoccupation with angels, ritual **purity**, and visionary experience (the prophets Ezekiel and **Isaiah**, as well as the angel-intoxicated Zechariah, were all **priests**), but represents a major shift in that ideology, changing focus from the (no longer existent) earthly Temple to its celestial counterpart. Most significant, perhaps, is the “democratization” of things that were once priestly prerogative: now any worthy individual, regardless of pedigree, could ascend to divine precincts, approach the Holy of Holies, and interact with angels.

That being said, the study and practice of Ma’asei- Merkavah was considered hazardous in the extreme, a threat to the practitioner on both mental and physical levels (Chag. 12b–15a).[2] It was also still not considered appropriate for the masses; the hierocracy of the priests was replaced with a meritocracy of spiritual excellence. The average Jew was discouraged from “descending” into the Merkavah, because it could lead to confusion and apostasy. For example, there is a pronounced tendency in some Hechalot texts for God and high angels to become confused and conflated. Other texts are marked with a kind of Gnosticism, sometimes bordering on polytheism. As a result, the Talmud cautions that a teacher should never expound the Ma’asei-Merkavah for more than one student at a time, and then only to students who are already established Sages, in order that they will be able to distinguish the “wheat” of the Merkavah experience from the “chaff.” Even established scholars, as in the case of Elisha ben Abuyah, could become unmoored from Jewish monotheism by the **visions** and teachings of the Merkavah (*Chag*. 12b–16b). The most oft-mentioned

figures in connection to this mystical tradition are Ishmael ben Elisha, Akiba ben Joseph, Joshua ben Levi, and Nechunyiah ben ha-Kanah.

The impact of the Merkavah tradition on Jewish esotericism is enormous, and almost all subsequent schools of Jewish **mysticism** have studied its texts, with its influence being most pronounced among the **German Pietist**, the tosafists, the Circle of the Special **cherub**, and the Iyyun Circle. The rhetoric of Ma'aseh Merkavah extends even further. Pietistic hymns based on merkavah imagery, such as the Yemenite Im Nin'alu, were still being composed in the 17th and 18th centuries.

1. J. Dan, *The Early Jewish Mysticism*, 7–24.

2. J. Davila, "The Hekhalot Literature and Shamanism," Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1994), 4–6.

Machane or Machaneh: (מחנה). "Encampment." The angelic hosts of **heaven** are divided into "encampments," depending upon their function and/or their principalities. The term echoes the story of the **Exodus**, in which the twelve tribes of Israel marched and camped in tribal formations called machaneh for the duration of their forty-year sojourn in the wilderness. Each heavenly machaneh is ruled by a princely **angel**. Mystics also refer to the Kavod and the Gevurah, the full scope of God's power in all its manifestations, as the "encampment" of God (Orach Chaim 18:1–3; Pes. 104a–b; J. *Pes*. 71). *SEE* ASCENT, HEAVENLY.

Machnisei Rachamim: "Conveyors of Compassion." This is a prayer petitioning the **angels** to intervene with God:

> Conveyers of compassions, obtain our mercy before the Master of compassion,
> Makers of prayer, make our prayer heard before the Hearer of prayer.
> Makers of wailing, make our wail heard, before the Hearer of wailing.
> Conveyers of tears, convey our tears before the King who yields to tears.
> Strive to raise up supplication, raise up supplication and plea,
> Before the King, high and exalted. The King, high and exalted.

This prayer is only recited at *Selichot,* a penitential service recited prior to the coming of Rosh Hashanah.

This prayer is anomalous in that the rule that Jews should pray only to God, and not to intermediaries, extends back to Talmudic times: "If troubles come upon a person, do not entreat the angel **Michael** or the angel **Gabriel**. Rather, entreat Me alone and I will help you immediately" (J. Ber. 9:1). **Maimonides**

makes this normative, "It is only fitting to pray to God and it is not fitting to pray to any other."

The Maharal of Prague was sufficiently troubled by the appearance of this prayer that he amended the wording (*Netivot Olam*, Netiv Ha'Avodah no.12), an innovation that did not catch on. In modern times, no less an ultra-Orthodox authority than the Hatam Sofer wrote that at Selichot he personally skips over this prayer (*Orach Chaim* no. 166), a shocking confession from the leader of a community that insists ALL of the tradition is sanctified and obligatory. The prayer has been entirely edited out of Selichot liturgy in the modernist Reform movement.

And yet at least one **Midrash** exists that endorses the idea of angels as intermediaries of our prayers (S of S R. 2:7). And many Jews worldwide recite the words *barchuni l'shalom* … ("bless me with peace"), when they sing the popular Shabbat hymn, Shalom Aleichem. This prayer is found only in the *Ashkenazi* (northern European) tradition, suggesting it was written when Jews were surrounded by a Christian culture that emphasized the use of divine intermediaries (saints) and even had services in honor of specific angels (Michaelmas).

Machon: (מכון). "Site/locale." One of the **seven heavens**, it is the level that warehouses all celestial precipitations: **rain**, snow, **hail**, **dew**, as well as the **winds**, storms, and vapors (Chag. 12b–13a).

Machpelah, the Cave of: *SEE* CAVES.

Macrocosm: *SEE* ADAM KADMON

Magen David: (מגן דוד). "Shield of David." A type of **hexagram**, this now-ubiquitous symbol of Judaism actually has its origins in occult circles. It was originally known as the "Seal of Solomon" and first appeared in Jewish esoteric literature. The hexagram was understood by many to be the symbol engraved on the magical ring of **Solomon**, linking it to Solomon's reputed power over demonic forces. It first appeared as a magical seal on **amulets**, **mezuzahs**, and other talismans. At some point the hexagram merged with another occult tradition about a "shield of David" that apparently came out of Arab magical traditions.[1] The hexagram is also a common device in alchemical texts, but what, if any, connection this has with Judaism is impossible to determine. In the 16th century, followers of **Isaac Luria** introduced the innovation of a sixth item onto the **Passover** Seder plate to correspond with six concepts associated with the Zer

Anpin, creating a pattern of six points.

The MD emerges as an ordinary symbol in Jewish books and on **synagogues**, probably because as the "Shield of David," it had messianic overtones. In all likelihood, its presumed protective properties enhanced its general appeal.

Not surprisingly, even after its universal adoption as a sign for Judaism, it continues as an anti-demonic symbol. Often magical and mystical representations of the MD incorporate words and names of power. One example found on an amulet has **psalm** 121 written out in the pattern of the hexagram. Other amulets feature divine names in each of the seven fields created by the lines forming the star.[2]

The most common form of hexagram talisman has one of the seventy-two **names of God**, most often the name Taftafiyah, in the center.

1. G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Shocken Books, 1971), 257–81.

2. Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 2, 914.

Maggid: (מגיד). "Teller/Revealer." While the term is frequently used to refer to an itinerant Jewish preacher, in Jewish esoteric traditions a maggid is an angelic teacher; a spirit guide. The maggid is related to the historically earlier phenomenon of the Sar ha-Torah and to other **angels** of revelation and **dreams** (particularly **Gabriel**), but there does seem to be a meaningful distinction: A maggid is often the genius, the hypostasis, or personification of some high attribute or nonpersonal supernal reality like the **Torah**, **Shekhinah**, **Wisdom** or the Mishnah. Occasionally the maggid is described as a kind of angelic apparition, but in most accounts it appears in the form of pneumatic **possession**. Though there is considerable variation in maggid accounts, conventionally a maggid manifests itself within the person, triggering automatic writing and xenoglossia (*Maggid Mesharim; Hesed l'Avraham*). Take, for example, this description of what happened to Moses Luzzato:

> There is a young man … he is a holy man, my master and teacher … Rabbi Moses Hayyim Luzzato. For these two and half years a maggid has been revealed to him, a holy and tremendous angel who reveals wondrous mysteries to him … This is what happens. The angel speaks out of his mouth, but we, his disciples, hear nothing. The angel begins to reveal to him great mysteries.[1]

In contrast to this "silent speech," Joseph Caro's maggid was quite vocal:

> No sooner had we studied two tractates of the Mishnah then our Creator smote us so that we heard a voice speaking out of the mouth of the saint, may

> his light shine. It was a loud voice with letters clearly enunciated. All the companions heard the voice but were unable to understand what was said. It was an exceedingly pleasant voice, becoming increasingly strong.[2]

It should be noted that in other accounts, Caro's maggid was understandable to bystanders.

Joseph Taitazak experienced his maggid as automatic writing.[3] The presence of the maggid is sometimes unsought and spontaneous, but is more usually associated with intensive text study combined with some mystical discipline and or/ritual.[4] It is in some way analogous to the Greek notion of a muse, though the maggid is largely bereft of the aesthetic dimension associated with a muse.

By the time of **Chayyim Vital**, the phenomenon was common enough that his teacher **Isaac Luria** had to spell out some criteria for distinguishing a legitimate maggid from a charlatan or mentally disordered person:

> My master the Ari [Isaac Luria] gave a sign [through which one can recognize a reliable maggid]. It must constantly speak the truth, motivate one to do good deeds, and not err in a single prediction. If it can explain the secrets and mysteries of the Torah, it is certainly reliable. From its words, one can recognize its level. The mystery of *ruach ha-kodesh* [divine inspiration] is this: It is a voice sent from on high to speak to a prophet or to one worthy of ruach ha-kodesh. But such a voice is purely spiritual, and such a voice cannot enter the prophet's ear until it clothes itself in a physical voice. The physical voice in which it clothes itself is the voice of the prophet himself, when he is involved in prayer or Torah study. This voice clothes itself in his voice and is attached to it. It then enters the prophet's ear so that he can hear it. Without the physical voice of the individual himself, this could not possibly take place.[5]

1. Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonie*s, 171–172.
2. Ibid., 124.
3. Dan, *The Heart and the Fountain*, 177–179.
4. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 69–71; Dan, *The Heart and the Fountain*, 178–180.
5. Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, 223–224.

Maggid Mesharim: Mystical memoir of Joseph Caro that gives detailed accounts of his spiritual **possession** by the **maggid** of the Mishnah:

> No sooner had we studied two tractates of the Mishnah then our Creator smote us so that we heard a voice speaking out of the mouth of the saint [Karo], may his light shine. It was a loud voice with letters clearly

> enunciated. All the companions heard the voice but were unable to understand what was said. It was an exceedingly pleasant voice, becoming increasingly strong. We all fell upon our faces and none of us had any spirit left in him because of our great dread and awe.[1]

The book records the many teachings and revelations given by this maggid over multiple possessions. This is the most famous incident of beneficent spirit possession in the mystical tradition.[2]

1. Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*, 24.
2. L. Fine, *Safed Spirituality: Rules of Mystical Piety, the Beginning of Wisdom* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), 54–55.

Magic: (קסם/*Kesem;* כשוף/*Kishuf*). "Magic" is one of those terms for a phenomenon that is hard to define, yet easy to recognize. For the purposes of this encyclopedia, "magic" is the overarching term for a **ritual** for power involving **incantations**, symbolic behavior, materials, and/or formulae meant to influence events and/or entities.[1]

There are several ways to further subdivide "magic" as it has been manifested in Jewish history and society. There is an informal but real distinction between religious **theurgy** and magic; this is fundamentally an issue of distinguishing between the godly deeds of power that arise from the sphere of **Torah** and Judaism and the deeds of power performed by adepts using what amounts to a "technology." Furthermore, a distinction may be made in the sources between what we today term **sorcery** and shamanism, which is to say, between learned, scholarly magic and folk magic. Such distinctions are made on the basis of the presumed formal education required for these respective arts. Finally, there is the issue of **witchcraft**—magic that is regarded to be malevolent in purpose and/or derives its power from infernal sources.

With regards to magic and theurgy, a starting point could be that "magic" is a ritual of power that is self-serving and intended for personal outcomes such as gaining influence over others, cursing enemies, or achieving wealth.[2] heurgy, by contrast, has a ostensive "religious" purpose, such as gaining a better understanding of Torah, **healing** the sick, receiving an apocalyptic revelation, or mending some corruption in God's relations to the universe.

This distinction, however, is difficult to sustain in reviewing the many, many varieties of rituals of power found throughout Jewish history. Many Hebrew texts that are obviously "religious" in their orientation, like Sefer **Chasidism**, nevertheless contain examples of self-serving adjurations. By the same token, obviously "magical" handbooks, such as The **Sword Of Moses**, also include

spells and rites that clearly have “higher” religious motives, such as **summoning** an **angel** to teach the adept Torah. The distinction between “religious” theurgy and self-serving” magic seems all the more indeterminate because these texts treat all kinds of spells as equally valid and worthwhile. What is more, a ritual of power can be *simultaneously* religious and self-serving. Taking the example of gaining mastery of Torah through an angelic instructor; it has to be acknowledged in Jewish culture that a demonstrated mastery of religious texts is both spiritually meritorious in its own right *and* a means of enhancing one’s personal and social status. Given this ambiguity, it makes more sense to propose a modification of the taxonomy of **prayer** and magic first put forth by Sir George Fraser in *The Golden Bough* (1922), which distinguishes both magic and theurgy from prayer based on the logic of how one addresses the numinous powers. A prayer is a supplication and appeal; it *asks* a deity for a boon or favor. Magic and/or theurgy, by contrast, is *imperative*; it commands and adjures. But even this distinction breaks down at a certain point: is the phrase “God bless this boy” a supplication or an order? Yet is generally the case that rituals of power are more purely mechanistic; they assumes that, if the ritual is done properly, there is no volition or favor involved on the part of the numinous entity or power being addressed—the desired outcome will simply occur. Accepting this distinction between prayer and magic based on who is in control, it is more logical to characterize theurgy and magic as really two aspects of this same phenomenon. Perhaps the only meaningful distinctions between the two is that theurgy is based in an idea of influencing divine (or demonic) forces, whereas magic proper is not tied to any deity or spiritual personality except that of the adept. The theurgist commands divine powers. The logical corollary to the exercise of theurgic power, however, is that the theurgic practitioner must be spiritually and morally fit in the eyes of the deity to arrogate such powers. By contrast, the magician activates what appear to be impersonal forces purely by means of the proper performance of the ritual itself.[3] This distinction between theurgy and magic is first proposed in the **Talmud** itself by Rabbi Hiyya (Sanh. 67b).

Jewish authorities have had differing attitudes toward the efficacy of “magic” in this sense: some have viewed it as simple illusionist trickery, while others have regarded it as a real paranormal phenomenon (Sanh. 67b). The Sage Judah the Prince, for example, was a great spokesman for the former opinion, ascribing the power of magic to the power of the human imagination, “Only a person who believes in the interpretation of signs is pursued by magic.” Many other Rabbis,

however, accepted the reality of magical power, believing it was introduced to mortals by the angels (I Enoch 7; Zohar I:58a).

Even when magic is regarded as a reality, however, Jews have universally treated magic as inferior to the miraculous power of God and the theurgic power of God's agents. This is neatly illustrated by the confrontation between **Moses** and the Egyptian wizards (Ex. 6–8; Sanh. 67b), for the author of Exodus accepted at face value that the Egyptians possessed paranormal powers, yet by the third plague the wizards of **Egypt** have to admit they have nothing to counter the feats of the God of Israel. The implication is that, while magic is real, the wondrous powers that God gives to the righteous are always superior to that of mere magic (Sanh. 68b), which brings up the other aspect of magic: Jews have informally distinguished between sorcery, shamanism, and witchcraft and reacted differently to each.

Still, Jews are hardly consistent about these distinctions. Some writers, for example, characterized the wondrous deeds of the Egyptian adepts in Exodus 7, as sorcery; as an art practiced by the learned elite of any traditional society. Other Jewish texts clearly regarded these magicians to be employing witchcraft—demonic magic.[4]

Moreover, while many of the wonders ascribed to Jewish heroes could be characterized as theurgic or miraculous, some of these feats appear overtly magical, in that they involved no direct appeal to God's power. Nevertheless, it is almost universally assumed by Jewish texts and readers that any supernatural power demonstrated by a Jewish Sage must derive, implicitly, from the power of Torah. This, in turn, is rooted in the assumption of righteousness: the Sages can bend the will of God only because they have submitted their will to the divine.[5]

As a result of these assumptions, one of the primary Talmudic rationales for labeling a supernatural ritual as *kesem*, and therefore forbidden, rather than as a *fele*, or divine manifestation, was simply the appearance of it being foreign, alien to Torah, or non-Jewish in origin—*Darkhei Amori*, ways of the Amorites. Likewise, if a "Jewish" supernatural ritual clearly aped the magic of gentiles, it was more likely to be suspect (Shab. 66a). Still, the Rabbis permitted colleagues to learn magic on a theoretical level in order to understand what they were up against (Sanh. 17a). The attitude of those who actually practiced such foreign magic could be harsh; one Sage declared, "He who acquires a single item of knowledge from a sorcerer forfeits his life." Yet unlike in contemporary Roman law, rabbinic law does not include a tort for damages done by sorcery, a fact that

suggests the Sages who shaped Jewish law retained serious doubts about whether magic was a real force capable of doing real damage.

Magic—in all forms—continued to have an ambivalent and confusing status in medieval Judaism. In addition to the Talmudic criteria, the medievals eventually developed a working distinction between licit and illicit rituals of power. For the medieval rabbis, "word magic" was permitted while magic involving persuasive objects—rituals involving the use of devices or materials to represent the desired result or the person to be influenced, like a **voodoo doll**—was forbidden. This was a discrimination they shared with the Pagan philosopher-theurgist Plotinus. Eliezer of Metz (ca. 12th century) made this distinction explicitly in his discussion of Jewish law on magic. In practice, the boundaries between what was considered foreign and what was Jewish, what was verbal and what was performative, tended to blur. Thus a Hebrew work like **Sefer ha-Razim** is virtually indistinguishable from Pagan magical texts in the use of *materia magica*. What is more, **amulets** are largely exempted from what otherwise seems to be a blanket ban against using devices of ritual power. By the Renaissance, a number of religious authorities tolerated, and a few even endorsed, the practice of a kind of scholarly sorcery that overlapped with the then fashionable gentile pursuit of hermetic/astrological magic and **alchemy**. Johannan Alemanno and Abraham Yagel, for example, considered mastery of the astro-magical disciplines to be the summa of a quality humanist education.[6] No less an authority than Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague wrote that sorcery that invokes divine names is, for all intents and purposes, indistinguishable from prayer (*B'er ha-Golah* 2). By contrast, Manasseh ben Israel condemned virtually all magic as demonic—but still exempted medicinal spells (*Nishmat Chayyim* 3:25, 253). In Eastern Europe, scholarly Jewish magic came to be overshadowed and co-opted by more shamanistic-charismatic forms. The **Baal Shem**, a practitioner that emerged in the Middle Ages, was the paradigmatic figure of this kind of folk-magical adept. In some ways, these baalei shem are a throwback to charismatic Talmudic wonderworkers like Chanina ben Dosa and Choni ha-Ma'agel. Thus it was assumed that many of the talents manifested by the Baal Shem Tov (**healing**, **fertility**, paranormal knowledge, teleportation, mystical ascent, **amulet** making, and **exorcism**) were part of the power of being righteous, regardless of the adept's level of education or Torah learning. *SEE* KABBALAH; LAW AND THE PARANORMAL.; SUMMONING.

1. For a summary of academic theories of magic, see W. van Binsbergen and F. Wiggerman, "Magic in History: A Theoretical Perspective and Its Application to Ancient Mesopotamia," http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/gen3/magic.htm.

2. J. Davila, “Ancient Magic (The Prayer of Jacob),” Lecture online at http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/divinity/rt/otp/abstracts/magis/, 1.

3. Idel, *Hasidism*, 83.

4. J. Neusner, “Miracle and Magic in Formative Judaism: The System and the Difference,” in Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict, J. Neusner, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 61–72.

5. B. M. Bosker, “Wonder Working and the Rabbinic Tradition: The Case of Hanina ben Dosa,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 16, no. 1 (1985): 42–92.

6. Idel, “Jewish Magic from the Renaissance Period to Early Hasidism,” in *Religion, Science, and Magic*, Neusner, 82–94.

Magic Square: Famous as an element of mystical mathematics from Greco-Roman times, Jewish magic squares most often involve permutations and notarikons of divine names. They are commonplace features on Hebrew seals, **amulets**, and **incantation bowls**. Their magical function seems to be to “enclose,” bind, and trap the malevolent force which the amulet is targeted against. In the case of **angel**-summoning devices, the function of the square is analogous, containing and restraining the numinous power of the angel so the adept can remain in control. The most famous collection of Hebrew magic squares appears in the *Book of Abramelin,* which is credited to Abraham of Worms. There are many dubious claims associated with this book, and though a Hebrew version exists, its origins are most likely German and Hermetic. The alchemical work *Esh M’shaef* also includes several fine examples.

ב	פ	ו	ח	כ	מ	י	ו
ו	ב	פ	ו	ח	כ	מ	י
י	ו	ב	פ	ו	ח	כ	מ
מ	י	ו	ב	פ	ו	ח	כ
כ	מ	י	ו	ב	פ	ו	ח
ח	כ	מ	י	ו	ב	פ	ו
ו	ח	כ	מ	י	ו	ב	פ
פ	ו	ח	כ	מ	י	ו	ב

Hebrew magic square

Maharal of Prague: *SEE* JUDAH LOEW BEN BEZALEL (THE MAHARAL).

Mahaway: An antediluvian **giant** who consults with **Enoch** to have his mantic **dreams** interpreted. He appears in the **Dead Sea Scrolls** manuscript Book of Giants.

Maidens: (עלמות/*Almaot*). Female angels of the **night** who attend the **Shekhinah** (Zohar I:21a; ZCh 183).

Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon): Jewish philosopher, legalist, and physician (Egyptian, ca. 12th–13th century). The greatest scholastic figure of the Middle Ages, the rationalist **Maimonides** would be appalled to learn that since his death he has been linked to many fantastic and supernatural events. A whole cycle of wonder tales are now associated with him, including his ominous **birth**, miraculous **healings**, and his success in fabricating homunculi. He was controversial in his own time and in the century following his passing, opposition to his ideas, especially his sweeping reinterpretion of Judaism as a rational philosophy, may well have propelled the rise of **Kabbalah** . Even so, his prestige has subsequently risen to such heights that all streams of Judaism, including various mystical schools have tried to claim him as one of their own.

Maklitu: (מקלתו). **Angel** and/or divine being mentioned in some **Hechalot** texts. Maklitu is likely an entity borrowed from Greek magical texts.

Makom, ha-: (המקום). "The Place/The Primordial One." A rabbinic/mystical name for God, apparently derived from a linguistic oddity in the **Bible**: *Va'yif'ga ba-makom*, "[Jacob] met the place," with "the place" being interpreted as a euphemism for God (Gen 28:11). While Judaism does not teach pantheism, that God and the Universe are coequal, it does teach *panentheism*, that God is the "place" of the world; the world does not contain God, but God contains the world (*Gen. R.* 40:6, 68:9). *SEE* GODHEAD; NATURE.

Malach: (מלאך). "Messenger." An **angel**.

Malach Adonai: (מלאך אדוני). Usually translated as "**angel** of YHVH," a more connotative but accurate translation should be "Artifice of YHVH" or even "Manifestation of YHVH," for the phrases *Malach YHVH* and *Malach El* are terms used in the **Bible** to designate a moment when the God of Israel becomes visible to humans.[1]

Generally, but mistakenly, interpreted to mean a divine entity distinct from God (i.e., an "angel" as we normally imagine them, however that may be), in

every place where “Malach Adonai” appears in the Bible, its usage indicates that God is now visible. The classic case is the binding of **Isaac** (Gen. 22:1–22). God first comes to **Abraham** as a disembodied voice (22:1–2), and even as the “Malach YHVH” appears to him (22:11), the conversation suddenly returns to God speaking to Abraham directly (22:16), indicating that God is even more “present” in the second manifestation than in the first. Tellingly, after this encounter with the Malach, Abraham re-names the locale where it happened “YHVH appears.”

The fact that this idiom refers not to an angel but to God momentarily becoming visible explains why in so many passages where the “Malach YHVH” or “Malach El,” or “Sar Tzevaot” appears, within a verse or two of the manifestation, God is described as present (Gen. 16:9, 22:11, 22:16; Ex. 3:2, 23:20–21, 31:11–13; Judg. 2:1, 5:13– 6:5; Zech. 2–4).

This avatar of God, whose “Name is in him” (Ex. 23:21), becomes the source of the **Hechalot** tradition about divine entities, seeming “super” angels, all of whom have the **Tetragrammaton** included in their names (most famously Akatriel-YaH, who appears in visionary report of Rabbi Ishmael in **Talmud** Berachot 7a) and all of whom merit the puzzling secondary epitaph, “God of Israel.” The solution to this confusion is that such entities are not actually angels in the sense that they are distinct sentient beings subservient to God. Instead they are a visible, personified emanation of the divine (Shev. 35b and the comments of RaSHI and Nachmanides on that passage). *SEE* CHERUB, THE UNIQUE.; FACE OF GOD; GLORY OF GOD; METATRON; VISION.

1. Kugel, *The God of Old*, 5–36.

Malach Shareit: (מלאך שרית). “Ministering Angel.” *SEE* GUARDIAN ANGELS ; MINISTERING ANGELS.

Malachei Chavala: (מלאכי חבלה). “Destructive Angels.” A Kabbalistic term that is sometimes used for **demons** , and other times refers to the manifestations of God’s strict justice. *SEE* GEHENNA.; PUNISHING ANGELS.

Malkat: (מלכת). “Queen.” One of the four demon queens, the mother of one of the other queens, Igrat. The name is grammatically odd in Hebrew, but she is based on the biblical term, “Queen of Heaven,” a Pagan deity condemned by the prophet **Jeremiah** (Jer. 7:18; 44:17).

Malbush, Sefer ha-: “Book of the Garment.” A magico-mystical handbook of the early medieval period, Sefer ha-Malbush describes magical uses of *levishat ha-*

Shem, “wearing the Name.” This is apparently meant literally, referring to the making of a magical cloak from deerskin.[1] Not only does it describe how to make, activate, and use the cloak, it also teaches the use of **tzerufim**, utilizing the letters of the **Hebrew** alphabet and the **names of God** in various combinations. ShM teaches that through these, the adept concentrates on divine matters. This technique promises both religious revelations on par with **Prophecy** and the power to influence events and entities. [2] *SEE* MAGIC; SORCERY.

1. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 77.
2. Dan, *The Heart and the Fountain*, 101–05.

Malchut: (מלכות). “Kingdom/Dominion.” Also known as **Shekhinah** and/or the **Holy Spirit**, it is the tenth and lowest sefirah, the aspect of God that interacts most intimately with the material world. As a result, **Kabbalah** has more to say about this one divine quality than virtually all the other **sefirot** combined. Many symbols signify Malchut, including Knesset Yisrael (the mystical **Body** of the Jewish people), the **moon**, the **sun**, and the Apple orchard. It is personified by **David**. As the “speculum that does not shine,” its associated **color** is black.

Man, Male: (איש/*Ish*, also *Adam*; *Gever*; *Zachar*). There are three archetypes of masculinity in Judaism: **Adam Kadmon** , the primordial man; Adam Rishon, the ordinary man; and the **Messiah**, the perfected man of the **World to Come** (Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* 134–42; *B.B.* 58a; *Tanh*. Tzaria 2).[1]

In traditional Jewish thought, men are considered the human norm. **Women**, by contrast, present the Sages with many of the exceptional and problematic issues involving Jewish observance and thinking. As feminist critics of traditional Judaism have observed, women represent “the other”—they are exceptional, which is not to say men were considered more virtuous than women. There is a theme of women having a greater innate capacity for piety than men that is woven throughout Jewish tradition, as exemplified by the legend that women refused to participate in the golden calf incident (Tosafot to R.H. 23a). Nonetheless, the “otherness” of women marked them as problematic on several levels.

Men could occupy any position or role of religious authority in Israelite and later Jewish society. The **priesthood** of Israelite religion was exclusively a masculine office. The same was true of the Levitical functions. This was not the case, however, when it came to charismatic leadership roles, such as that of **prophet** or judge, where women could also rise to places of authority. The role

of rabbi has been a solely male one until the 1970s, when the first women were ordained by a Jewish seminary.

Despite his normative status in Jewish literature, a man is considered an incomplete human without a woman. Men are also more vulnerable to spiritual assault than women. Men are considered particularly vulnerable prior to **circumcision** (Ex. 4) and during a **Wedding**.[2] Circumcision in particular is a powerful transformative ritual, for it creates a more proper balance between the masculine and feminine sides of men (Gen. R. 46:4).[3]

1. Schwartz, *Tree of Souls*, 125–126.

2. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 121.

3. H. Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus, and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 170–173. Also see Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*.

Manasseh ben Israel: Jewish communal leader and Kabbalist (Spanish/Dutch, ca. 17th century). He taught a popular version of mystical ideas concerning **reincarnation** and the **soul**. He is the author of Nishmat Chayyim ("The Soul of Life"), a comprehensive summary of then-current beliefs about the soul and a source for many dybbuk possession narratives.

Mandrake: (דודאים/*Duda'im,* also *Yavrucha*). A root that grows in an anthropoid shape. In the **Bible**, the mandrake root is treated as an aphrodisiac and **fertility** enhancer (Gen. 30). The Talmudic name, *yavrucha,* which means "pursuer/shunner," suggests mandrake has anti-demonic properties also. There appear to be other, more unsavory uses; in a notably cryptic passage, even for the **Talmud**. J. Eruvin 10:26 forbids reading Bible verses over a mandrake, yet does not state the purpose of the **ritual**, assuming the reader will understand.

Manna: (מן). "Whatchamacallit," possibly derived from *mah*, "what." Manna is the heavenly **bread** that sustained the Israelites for the forty years they wandered in the desert. According to rabbinic traditions, manna was created on the twilight of the sixth day of **Creation** and is stored in heavenly vaults (Avot 5:9; PdRE 3; Tanh. be-Shallach 22). It fell with the **dew** each morning, a double portion coming on Fridays to provide for the **Sabbath**, when none would appear. The **wind** blew each day prior to its arrival, so it wouldn't get dirty. The **Righteous** among the Israelites received it ready-to-eat with front-door delivery; everyone else had to go out to gather it and prepare it for consumption. It had the taste of bread, honey, mother's milk, or **oil**, depending on who was eating it. When it melted in the noonday **sun**, animals would come and drink the rivulets it formed. These animals became the most delicious and highly prized game: harts,

gazelles, and deer (Yoma 75a; MdRI BeShallach). In *Yoma* 75b, Rabbi Akiba dubs it *lechem adirim*, “Bread of the Powerful Ones [angels].”

Manna stopped the moment Israel entered the Promised Land. A sample nonetheless was displayed before the **Holy of Holies** in the First **Temple**. It will fall again in the Messianic Era. According to the **Zohar**, the manna narratives are figurative descriptions of the divine **emanations** that “feed” and sustain the lower worlds (I:157a–b; II:183a). In other passages, it is the divine source of male **virility** (III:155b; II:213b).

Manual of Discipline: A text found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. It gives an elaborate account of the angelic wars between the **angels** of **darkness** and the angels of **light** , wars that mirror those being fought between the sons of light and the sons of darkness on **Earth**.

Maon: (מאון). The fifth of the **seven heavens** (Chag. 12b).

Maria Hebraea: Alchemist (Egyptian, ca. 1st century CE). She is credited with the discovery of the properties of hydrochloric acid and the invention of the *Kerotakis* or *Bain Maria* water-bath oven, as well as other standard alchemist’s devices. She is also the first to give a formula for making the **philosopher’s stone**. She taught that all the diverse elements are derivative of a single hylic substance. Sometime later, alchemical tradition conflates her identity with that of the biblical **Miriam**.[1]

1. Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists*, 60–94; K. K. Doberer, *The Goldmakers: Ten Thousand Years of Alchemy* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1948), 21–22.

Marriage: (נשואין). A good marriage is a small restoration of the **Eden**-like perfection we knew at the beginning of time (M.K. 18b; Sot. 2a; Zohar I:91b). A good match is also a **miracle**, as difficult as parting the Sea of Reeds, and successful matchmaking has kept God occupied since **Creation** (Gen. R. 68:4; Zohar I:137a). Later **Kabbalah** links successful and unsuccessful marriages to issues of **reincarnation** and “soul mates” (literally) finding each other (Zohar I:73b; *Sha’ar ha-Gilgulim*).

Even God is described as entering into marriage, either with the people **Israel** (Deut. 3:12) or, in the aspect of Tiferet/Holy Blessed One, with the Shekhinah (Zohar II:114a). *SEE* ANDROGYNY; SEX; WEDDING.

Masechet Hechalot: A short but relatively intact text of **Hechalot** literature, it describes the heavenly **palace** and, in particular, God’s **Throne of Glory**.

Masekhet Chibbut ha-Kever: This book documents the **soul's** journey into the afterlife. *SEE* BODY; DEATH; ETERNAL LIFE.

Masekhet Gehinnom: "Tractate [on the] Underworld." A medieval text describing **Gehenna**, it instructs the reader about the earthly sins that cause the **soul** to be sent there and gives vivid descriptions of the afterlife consequences. Joshua ben Levi is the tour guide in these texts. There are a number of variant manuscripts and the information contained in them differs from one text to the next.

Masekhet Hechalot: "Tractate [on Divine] Palaces." Part of the **merkavah** mystical traditions, it is a text for the adept who wishes to ascend to **heaven**. *SEE* HECHALOT.

Mashchit: (משחית). "Destroyer." It is the name of the entity that slays the firstborn Egyptians at the **Exodus** (Ex. 12:13–23). Also an alternate name for the **Angel of Death**. In Tomar Devorah, *Mashchit* is a demonic entity brought into existence as a result of human sin. *SEE* DEMONS; PLAGUES; PUNISHING ANGELS.

Mashiva: (משיבע). "Binding." An adjuration spell for summoning and commanding **angels**. The **language** of adjuring angels in Jewish texts often mimics legal language. *SEE* CIRCLES; GET; HECHALOT; MAGIC SQUARE; SUMMONING.

Mastemah: "Enmity." A demonic prince, perhaps an alternative name for **Satan**, Mastemah is mentioned as the leading demonic entity opposing **Moses** in the Book of Jubilees. *SEE* APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE.; DEMONS.

Masturbation: *SEE* NOCTURNAL EMISSION

Mataniel: (מתניאל). A **punishing angel** of **Gehenna** (Mid. Konen).

Matariel: (מטריאל). The **angel** of **rain** and precipitation (I Enoch).

Matriarchs: (אמהות). The "mothers of Israel" (even the concubines and "informal" consorts, like Tamar) were **prophets** (Gen. R. 67:9, 72:6, 85:9), and their names have protective powers. *SEE* ANCESTORS; MOTHER; PATRIARCHS AND MATRIARCHS; RACHEL; REBECCA; SARAH.



Four Jewish women by E. M. Lilien

Matrona, Matronit: (מטרונא). Another title for the **Shekhinah** (ZCh). She is the aspect of the divine Presence that mourns for **Jerusalem** and seeks constantly to reunite with the masculine aspect of divinity, the Holy One.

Matzah: (מצה). **Unleavened bread**. *SEE* BREAD.

Mavet: (מות). “Death.” *SEE* ANGEL OF DEATH.

Mayim Dukhrin/Mayim Nukvin: (מים נוקבין/מים דוכרין). “Male Waters/Female Waters.” Idiomatic terms for the divine energies that flow between the higher and lower **Partzufim**, harmonizing them and thereby fructifying and sustaining life in the universe. According to the teachings of **Isaac Luria**, it is the proper performance of the *Sh’ma* **prayer** (and in some cases, the *Amidah*) of Jewish liturgy that theurgically unites these waters (Eitz Hayyim 39:7; *Sha’ar ha-Kavvanot* 20c). In other versions, it seems that the human performance of the commandments, *en toto*, stimulates the female waters and makes them receptive to the masculine energy. *SEE* PHALLUS; SEMEN; WATER.

Mazal: (מזל). “Planet/Constellation.” In Jewish esotericism, it is commonly associated with astrology. And while the word has never lost its literal meaning

of “planet,” it now has a much more familiar connotative meaning of “luck” or “fortune.” From this word is derived the expression of well-wishing, *Mazal Tov*, “Good Star/Good Fortune!” (Sot. 12b; Shab. 156a; B.K. 2b; M.K. 28a). Sefer Chasidim personifies mazal and describes it as a type of **guardian angel** (1162). *SEE* ASTROLOGY; FATE.; GAD; PLANETS; ZODIAC.

Mazzamauriello: “Tellurian **demons**.” An Italian-Jewish term for a *kesil*, an imp or mischievous spirit.

Mazzik: (מזיק) “Damager/Afflicter.” A type of imp or **demons**, perhaps a disembodied **soul**. In the **Talmud**, the terms *shedim* and *mazzikim* are used interchangeably for demons, but in some sources there is a differentiation of mazzikim into its own class of evil spirit. Compared to shed, mazzik is relatively uncommon in the Talmud, only appearing a few times, mostly in tractates Berachot and Pesachim:

> For three reasons people should not go into a ruin, because of suspicion [of sexual misconduct there], because of the danger of collapse, and because of demons.
>
> Because of demons—And why not suffice [to discourage people] with the considerations of suspicion or collapse? You might have the case of a new ruin, and two people who are honorable. If there are two people, then what consideration of demons is at hand [mazzikim are thought to strike the solitary traveler]? In a place which demons inhabit, there is danger [even to two]. (Ber. 3b)

According to the **Midrash**, mazzikim ruled the world until the building of the **Temple** curbed their power (Num. R. 12:13).

In Jewish sources, most evil spirits are less a matter of earth-trembling, infernal weapon-wielding, soul-ripping hell hounds, then they are impish creatures who inflict ill fortune and ill health. Like leprechauns, djinns, and elves, Mazzikim take advantage of human carelessness, as in this humorous example of what can happen by ignoring the rule that doing anything in pairs is bad luck:

> And if a man forgot himself [and drank exactly two drinks] and happened to go out, what is his remedy? Let him take his right-hand thumb in his left hand and his left-hand thumb in his right hand and say thus: You [two thumbs] and I, surely that is three! [i.e., an odd number] But if the demon hears him and replies, You and I, surely that is four!? [i.e., three plus the demon are four] let

him reply to him, You [the demon that is now four] and I are surely five [he finds something to add to the grouping]! And if he hears one saying, You and I are six, let him reply to him, You and I are seven. This once happened until [someone reached] a hundred and one, at which point the demon exploded. (Pes. 110a)

The term *mazzikim* becomes more widely used in the Middle Ages, being RaSHI's preferred term for imps.

Mechashef: (מכשף). "Witch/Warlock." This appears in a list of prohibited occult professions (Deut. 18:10). The exact meaning in its original context is unclear, but has generally been defined since the Talmud as one who engages in **witchcraft**, which is regarded by some sages to be a kind of **magic** that rejects even the principle of **theurgy**, that paranormal power emanates from a supreme being), though others dispute this:

> Why are they called "warlock"? [the word is read as an acronym for the phrase that follows] Because they "deny the power of the [divine] Pleroma." [But they are foolish, because] there is none else besides Him. R. Chanina said: Even by witchcraft. A woman once attempted to take earth from under R. Chanina's feet [to use it for witchcraft] He said to her, "If you succeed in your attempts, go and practice it, for it is written, however, 'There is none else beside him' [i.e., it won't work]." But that is not so, for did not R. Johanan say: "Why are they called *mekhashshefim*? " [R. Johanan derives an alternative phrase] Because "they lessen the power of the Pleroma" [they do assume divine power, but use it to evil ends, bringing disrepute on God]. (Sanh. 67a)

Meditation: (התבוננות/*Hitbonenut*, also *Hitbodedut; Histakelut; Yichudim*). Contemplation, meditation, and **trance**-inducing practices are a feature of Judaism from biblical times. These practices, which vary greatly from one mystical text to another, include breath control, mantra-like chanting, reciting divine names, **silence**, self-isolation, yoga-like stress positions, creative visualization, and/or concentrating on a symbol, color, or object.

Meditation techniques can also be incorporated into **prayer** practices in order to produce **kavanah**, and so invigorate and activate the potential divine power of the traditional liturgy.[1]

The goals of Jewish meditation vary, depending on the particular school. Some promote it as a means to experiencing divine **visions** or accessing supernal

knowledge. Others emphasize, in association with *kavanah*, the theurgic power of meditation to "arouse" a divine response, affect an object, or influence a person or event.

Meditation methods can be found in the writings of Abraham Abulafia, Azriel of Gerona, Moses Cordovero, and Chayyim Vital. Many Chasidic masters also emphasize meditation, both as an adjunct to prayer and as a separate discipline.

1. See Kaplan, *Mediation and Kabbalah*.

Medium: (דורש המת/*Doresh ha-Meit,* also *Yeddioni*). A medium is someone who invites voluntary **possession** by a spirit. In biblical times, this was assumed to be an evil spirit (*Ov*) or **ghost** (Lev. 20:27; Deut. 18:14). By the Middle Ages, however, mediumism usually involved the accepting the **soul** of a **Righteous ancestor** or saint (*Ibbur Tov*), in order to commune with them.

Genesis posits that human life itself is only possible so long as the "spirit" of life occupies the **Body** (Gen. 2:7, 5:3). Certain high attributes have their own genius; Elders in the Israelite camp were seized by the spirit of **Prophecy** (Ex. 24) and **Joshua** by the spirit of **wisdom** (Deut. 34).

Biblical **necromancers** could summon the dead to answer questions, but it is unclear from the biblical accounts whether this actually entailed physical possession (1 Sam. 29). The Gospels provide several examples of Jews being possessed by the **Holy Spirit**. Philo of Alexandria describes the experience of prophecy as a kind of mediumship (*Who is Heir* 258–266).

There are disapproving allusions in the **Talmud** to those who fast in order to attract "**unclean spirits**" and attempt a séance with the dead (*Sanh*. 65b; *Shab*. 152b–153a). **merkavah** mystics would **summon** an **angel** of revelation called Sar ha-Torah, possibly to possess their bodies and speak through them, in order that they could accelerate their mastery of **Torah study**. The first references to summoning **demons** and enslaving them for beneficent purposes appear in magical texts at this time, such as the **Testament of Solomon**.

Many mystics record accounts of voluntary spirit possession. Notables who testify to such experiences include Abraham Abulafia, Moses Cordovero, Joseph Caro, **Isaac Luria**, and Chayyim Vital. As the preceding list suggests, benevolent possession was particularly a major interest among the Kabbalist brotherhood of Safed. Possessing spirits could include the ibbur (the virtuous dead), an angelic being, or a **maggid** (a personified aspect of Torah). Solomon Alkabetz claims to have been possessed by the **Shekhinah**, the immanent divine Presence that the mystics regarded to be in "exile" on **Earth** alongside Israel.[1]

Achieving a beneficent possession usually involves a multistep process. The

Safed mystics give us the most detailed accounts of how to have a mediumistic experience. First, the potential medium must be morally upright and fully conversant with the Written and oral Torah. Repeated **purification**, involving physical mortification through **fast**, or occasionally even more extreme measures, is also a prerequisite. He (the medium is usually a he) must also work toward mindfulness, purifying even his thoughts. Many will recite texts from Jewish tradition in a mantra-like way. The mystic intensifies his practices as he approaches transition to mediumship. Most practitioners will arrange for some conditions of isolation from the distractions of the world. Luria's **incubation** practice of **Yichudim.** involved being at the grave of a righteous man, literally laying over the tomb in order to "animate" the spirit, and in effect "reversing" the **Death** by using one's own body to house the dead **soul**. This was apparently inspired by the example of the prophet Elisha in 2 Kings.

Reports of mediumistic possession include **xenoglossia** (automatic speech), automatic writing, and radical changes in behavior and speech patterns. Firsthand accounts describe what we today might label a dissociative experience. *SEE* DIVINATION; YEDDIONI.

1. Bilu, "Dybbuk and Maggid," 341–66.

Megillat Ahimaaz: *SEE* YUHASIN, SEFER.

Megillat Setarim: "Book of Secrets." The mystical-magical memoir of Isaac Safrin of Komarino.

Meir ha-Baal Nes: Saintly medieval rabbi and wonderworker (Israel, ca. 15th–16th century). He vowed not to lie down until the advent of the **Messiah**. As a result, he is buried upright in a tomb outside Tiberias. To this day, thousands of pilgrims go there every year, and reportedly many **miracles** have been wrought for them.

Meir of Rothenberg: Rabbi and communal leader (German, ca. 13th century). Meir ben Baruch was a saintly and beloved rabbi. When he was imprisoned by gentile authorities in order to extract a ransom for the Jewish community, Rabbi Meir ordered the ransom not be paid, and he died in prison after many years. A number of miraculous stories are told about his imprisonment. In one such legend, he received a heavenly **Torah** written in **Moses's** own hand to comfort him during his incarceration. After his death, his **Body** was left in its cell for fourteen years, until a pious disciple bribed his way to retrieving the body. When the cell was finally opened, the body was found perfectly preserved.

Meirat Einayim: A mystical-magical tract written by Isaac ben Samuel of Acre.

Mekubbal: (מקובל). A person trained in the practical **Kabbalah** : amulet making, protective **incantations**, and folk healing. The term first appears in the early modern era. Such figures still function in the traditional communities of modern Israel and America. At times it is used to refer to any Kabbalist. *SEE* AMULET; BAAL SHEM; HEALING.

Melaveh Malchah: (מלווה מלכה). "Escorting the Queen." The ritual meal of *Melaveh Malchah* ("Escorting the Queen") involves **prayers** , dancing, and songs performed at the close of the **Sabbath**, often as an extension of the "third meal" and Havdalah (hence it is sometimes called "fourth meal").

It is intended to extend the Shabbat rest and experience. Based on a customary practice mentioned in passing in the **Talmud** (Shab. 119b; *S. A.* Orach Chayyim 300), it is greatly expanded by Hasidism into an extended, at time raucous, party. The ritual marks not only the departure of the Shekhinah ("the Queen") from those who have known her special intimacy throughout the Sabbath, but also the taking leave of the "added **souls**" that join us during the Sabbath. The Shekhinah is thereby strengthened for the ordinary days that will follow. It also benefits the living and the dead. Participation by the living may enjoy various blessings, including relief to illness or barreness (*Itaamei ha- Minhagim*, pt. 1, 51).[1]

Loosely connected to the theme of extra-ensoulment during Shabbat, according to one tradition, the souls of departed sinners in **Gehenna** are spared punishment for the duration of the Sabbath. Performing Melaveh Malchah is understood to extend that reprieve and help ease their term in the punishing afterlife.[2] *SEE* SABBATH-QUEEN

1. A. Wertheim, "Traditions and Customs in Hasidism," in *Essential Papers in Hasidism*, G. Hundart (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991), 372.

2. Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in Classic Kabbalah*, 277, and Rabinowicz, *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, 309.

Melchizedek: (מלכי-צדק). The mysterious Priest/King of Salem, who welcomed **Abraham** in the name of El Elyon, "God Most High" (Gen. 14), and receives cryptic mention in **psalm** 110. Such a pivotal but elliptical character naturally triggers much interpretative analysis. In the **Midrash**, he is identified with **Shem:**

> R. Zechariah said on R. Ishmael's authority: The Holy One, blessed be He, intended to bring forth the priesthood from Shem, as it is written, "And he [Melchizedek=Shem] was the priest of the most high God." But because he

> gave precedence in his blessing to Abraham over God, He brought it forth from Abraham; as it is written, And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be the most high God.” Said Abraham to him, “Is the blessing of a servant to be given precedence over that of his master?” Straightway it [the priesthood] was given to Abraham, as it is written, Adonai said unto my lord, “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool”; which is followed by, “Adonai hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek,” meaning, “because of the words of Melchizedek.” Hence it is written, “and *he* was a priest of the most High God,” [implying that] he was a priest, but not his descendants. (Ned. 32b. Also Gen. R. 46:7; PdRE 27)

In another source, he is one of four eschatological figures linked to the “four smiths” mentioned in Zechariah 2. He was born circumcised (Gen. R. 43:6). His academy was one of the few places the **Holy Spirit** found refuge during the period between the expulsion from **Eden** and the birth of Abraham (Mak. 23b) and his blessing was uniquely powerful in its time (Gen. R. 43:8).

In I Enoch (Slavonic) and in a **Dead Sea Scrolls** fragment devoted to him, Melchizedek is a nephew of **Noah** who was translated to **heaven** to serve as a **priest** on high until the advent of the Messianic Era. In another DSS text, he appears as the “Angel of Light” (*Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice*).

Zohar subjects Malchizedek to a particularly complex interpretation. As is often the case, it construes the biblical person to be an allegory for the divine **Pleroma**. As such, his name (“kingdom of righteousness”) reveals him to be the **Shekhinah**, while his title (“perfect king”) represents the realization of union with the higher **sefirot**, especially Binah, which then blesses Chesed (i.e., Abraham in the biblical narrative) (Zohar I:86b–87a).

In Christian lore, he is a prefiguration of **Jesus**.

Mem: (ם, מ). Thirteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It has the numeric value of forty and the vocalic value of “m.” As the first letter in words like *Moshe* (Moses), *Miryam* (Miriam), *Mashiach* (Messiah), and Malchut (Kingdom), it signifies majesty and power. It is one of the five letters that also has a *sofit*, or end-form, a totally enclosed shape symbolizing the mysterious, concealed nature of such power.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 143–50.

Memory: Memory, especially the capacity to retain knowledge of **Torah**, is highly valued in Jewish tradition (Deut. 4:9; Chag. 9b) and forgetfulness is feared (Hor. 13b). Not surprisingly, then, there arose efforts to gain and retain knowledge of Torah through paranormal means. The tzitzit, or ritual fringes (Num. 15:19), are thought to enhance remembering the commandments through the magical potency of a knot "binding" the knowledge to the wearer (Gen. R. 88.2). Most famously, the Sar ha-Torah, the angelic Prince of the Torah, could be **summoned** to assist an adept in mastering and holding on the religious teachings. Other sources refer to a personified entity of memory named Zachar. Based on the **gematria** of his name, he is credited with 227 powers (*Kli Yakar*).

Memory, Book of: (*Sefer ha-Zicharon*). The celestial book in which the deeds of every person are recorded, it may or may not be the same as the **Sefer ha-Chayyim** , the Book of Life (Ez. 4:15; *Targum Esther* 6:1; Zohar I:8a; Zohar II:70a).

Memra: (ממרא). "Speech/Logos/Word." Already in the Hebrew Scriptures there are passages where God's word takes on a life of its own: "The Eternal sent a word into Jacob, and it rested upon Israel" (Isa. 9:7); "He sent His word, and healed them" (Ps. 107:20); and "His word runs very swiftly" (Ps. 147:15).

Inspired by the divine word-acts of Genesis 1, the Egyptian-Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria described God's "word" as a kind of intermediate being between God and **Creation**. The *Logos*, not God, is the proximate agent of Creation (*Op*. 22). It is God's "idea of ideas" (*Op*. 25); it is the manifest part of an otherwise hidden God (*Dia*. 147). Philo also describes the Logos as "God's image" and "man of God" (*Dia*. 41, 148). It only the Logos we relate to when we experience communion with God. Perhaps it is not surprising that Philo lived roughly a half century before the start of the Jesus movement. Many have commented on how Philo's idea of Logos was adapted by early Christians to describe their founder. Perhaps because he wrote in Greek, Philo's influence on actual Jewish thinking was less direct and less dramatic.

Yet it is not completely absent. In Aramaic *targumim* (paraphrastic translations of the Hebrew **Bible**), the translators often take incidents in the Hebrew Bible that involve a direct encounter between God and people and insert the term *memra* (that's a rough Aramaic cognate for logos). Thus it becomes the "Word of God" that interfaces with creation. So, where **Moses** says, "I stood between the Eternal and you" in the Hebrew text (Deut. 5:5), the Targum has, "… between the Memra of the Eternal and you." The exact function of this term is a

matter of controversy. Some say it is meant to soften in translation the more bluntly anthropomorphic, less philosophical **language** the Hebrew Bible uses in describing God. Others posit that it is meant to signify an intermediate stage of divine **emanation**, a form of the divine **Glory** that allows the perfect, unchanging God to interact with an imperfect and changing Creation. Or, as the term itself implies, it may signify the creative and theurgic power present in divine speech (MdRI BeShallach 10).[1] *SEE* INCANTATIONS, SPELLS, AND ADJURATIONS; NAMES OF GOD; SPECULUM.

1. F. C. Burkett, “Memra, Shekhinah, Metatron,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 24 (1923): 158–59. Also see Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. VI, 464–65.

Memuneh: (ממונה). “Deputy.” Originally this referred to the deputy High **Priest**. It came to refer to the genius or angel that energizes every discrete phenomenon in the universe. Thus every star, planet, month, day, human, nation, land, and even abstractions like “justice” and “love,” have their own *memuneh.* Barely mentioned in rabbinic literature, it becomes more prominent in the Middle Ages. *SEE* ANGEL AND ANGELOLOGY; MINSTERING ANGELS.

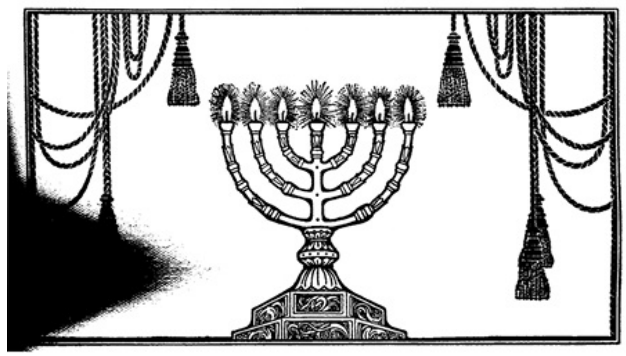
Menachem: The given name of the **Messiah** ben David *(*Sanh. 98b; Lam. R. 1:51; *Sefer Zerubbabel*).

Menachesh: (מנחש). “Augurer/Charmer/Diviner.” Mentioned in Deuteronomy 10:18, the name is derived from the Hebrew root for “snake.” A *menachesh* is someone who reads signs and **omens**. Scripture specifically applies this term to Joseph’s hydromancy, or “cup reading,” mentioned in Genesis 44:5. The **Talmud** regards the *menachesh* to be a professional diviner and interpreter of omens, someone who studies the behavior of **animals**, such as birds, snakes, and weasels, for mantic information (Sanh. 65b–66a). **Maimonides** also embraces this definition (*M.T.*, Avodah Zara 11:4).

Mene, Mene, Tekel, Ufarsin: (מנא מנא תקל ופרסין). The modern idiom “the writing on the wall” comes from this phrase, which according to the book of Daniel paranormally appeared in the **palace** of King Belshazzar, written by a supernal **hand** (Dan. 5:25). The **Bible** itself does not give a fully satisfactory explanation of the phrase; it is usually rendered “He has measured, measured, weighed, and divided.” The puzzle is deepened by the fact that the book of Daniel, when it repeats the phrase, changes how it is read (5:26). Subsequently, it has become the subject of esoteric speculation. The **Talmud** proposes that it is some kind of atbash, a substitution code, or that it should be read in reverse order, but the

results are themselves not particularly coherent (Sanh. 22a).

Menorah: (מנורה). “Lamp.” The menorah is a golden oil-lamp candelabra used in the **Temple** in **Jerusalem**. Built according to a pattern revealed by God to **Moses**, its appearance is that of a stylized bush with six curved branches coming off of its central stem (Ex. 25). It thus resembles a kind of cosmic tree, and the appearance is probably meant to remind the viewer of the burning bush (Ex. 3).



Menorah

It is by far the most ancient symbol of Judaism. The menorah of which we speak is not to be confused with the nine-branch *chanukiyah*, a menorah used exclusively to celebrate the **miracle** of Chanukah.

According to legend, the menorah of the First Temple was hidden from the Babylonians and restored to the Second Temple (Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 4:321). At the destruction of the Second Temple, it was swallowed up by the **Earth** and its whereabouts will be revealed only in the time of the **Messiah**.

The spiritual significance of the menorah is multifold. Some see the six branches as representing the six-winged fiery **serafim angels** (Isa. 6). Its seven lamps symbolize the seven days of **Creation**. It can also be seen as an inverted **tree**, with its roots in **heaven**. The **Kabbalah** teaches that the menorah is a stylized representation of the **sefirot**, with the seven branches signifying the lower seven sefirot that interact with the world of action.

The menorah is a popular image to include on an **amulet**. Paper amulets may have an image of a menorah made from microscript, usually using verses of Psalm 67. According to one amulet manual, David inscribed Psalm 67 in the form of a menorah on his battle shield. Amulets made in this pattern are very common among Jews of the East. *SEE* FIRE; LIGHT; PSALMS; SYNAGOGUE.

Menstruation: From the earliest times in Israelite history, women’s monthly cycle of menstruation was viewed with awe and considered an extraordinary

phenomenon. Because they have the power to render everything they touch *tamei* (impure/uncanny), menstruating **women** are isolated to varying degrees in traditional communities, usually by simply avoiding physical contact, but sometimes by sleeping apart from their husbands, limiting their handling of communal objects, etc. Menstruating women were a particular concern for the **priesthood**, as contact with them temporarily rendered a priest unfit to perform his duties. Many Kabbalists likewise believed that contact with menstrual **blood** had the potential to interfere with their mystical practices.

It is common, to the cusp of the modern era, to find menstruation designated one of the punishments visited upon **Eve** for her disobedience (*Sefer ha-Mitzvot ha-Nashim* 3b–4a). There is one document, *Baraita de-Masekhet Niddah*, which ascribes all kinds of negative effects to menstruation. As a result, some medieval Jewish authorities went beyond mere issues of ritual **purity**/impurity, believing menstruants to be powerful carriers of a variety of ills, including boils, leprosy, and other malevolent effects. Menstruation apparently enhanced the effects of **witchcraft**, making it more lethal.

On the flip side, Genesis Rabbah interprets Sarah’s reaction in Genesis 18:12 as enthusiasm, not for her husband’s carnal attention or even for the prospective **birth** of a son, but at the return of her menstrual cycle—she literally calls it a “delight” (48:17, also see PdRE 36; B.M. 87a).

Meonen: (מעונן). “Soothsayer.” One who can make apparitions appear. The word may be derived from the Hebrew *anan*, “cloud,” suggesting someone who reads **omens** in the sky or interprets smoke patterns, a common form of **divination** in Mesopotamia. The Talmudic Sages differ on the meaning of this term, some saying a *meonen* is a user of **witchcraft**, while others claim it refers to an astrologer. The **Talmud** also accuses the meonen of using illusions and sleight of hand to deceive observers (Sif. D. 171; Sanh. 65b).

Merkavah: “Chariot.” *SEE* CHARIOT; MA’ASEI-MERKAVAH.

Merkavah, Ma’asei-: “Workings of the [Divine] Chariot.” *SEE* MA’ASEI-MERKAVAH.

Merkavah Rabbah: A manuscript text of the **Hechalot** literature, probably belonging to the cluster of Sar ha-Torah traditions for **summoning angels** of revelation.

Meshiv, Sefer ha-: “Book of the Responding Entity” or “Book of Answering.” A medieval manual for summoning both angelic and demonic spiritual entities. As

is the case with many other magical books, **Moses** appears as a central figure.

The only legitimate purpose for summoning supernatural forces, according to the book, is to destroy the power of **evil** in the world. Written in Spain between the 14th and 15th centuries, it exists only in manuscript form.[1] *SEE* ANGEL AND ANGELOLOGY; CIRCLE; DEMONS; REINA, JOSEPH DELLA; SUMMONING.

1. M. Idel, "Magic and Kabbalah in the 'Book of the Responding Entity'," in *The Solomon Goldman Lectures VI*, M. Gruber, ed. (Chicago: Spertus College of Judaica Press, 1993).

Meshulahel: A demoness (*Pardes Rimmonim*).

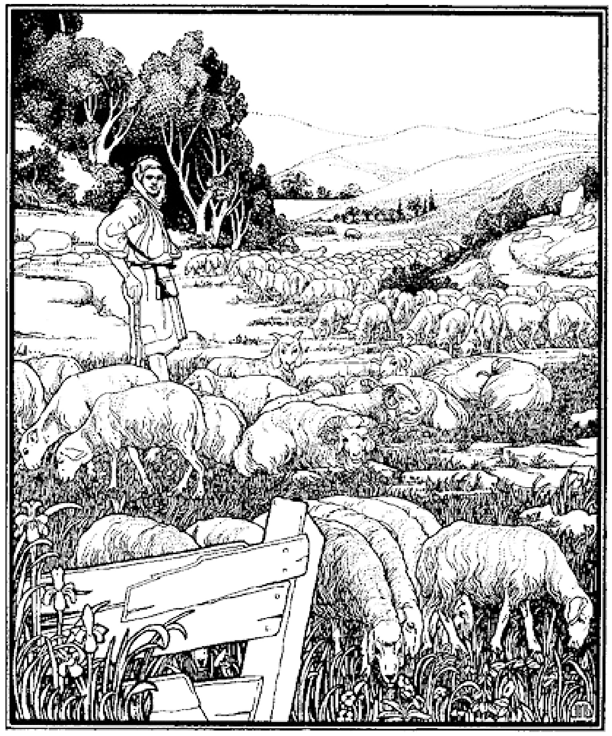
Messiah: (משיח/*Mashiach*). God's eschatological anointed king; the central figure of Jewish eschatological beliefs.

In ancient Israel, the kings and the High **Priests**, and even sometimes prophets, were anointed with **oil** when they ascended to their office. A person so anointed was called a *mashiach*.

In 2 Samuel 7, God promises **David** that his seed will hold the throne of Israel for all eternity:

> Adonai declares to you that Adonai Himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.

Out of this royal theology emerges the belief that an ideal king, a descendant of David, will arise and restore the fortunes of Israel at the end of time, defeating its enemies, bringing back its exiles. The prophets taught that the influence of this end-times Messiah would be international—war and oppression will cease, there will be a universal **healing**, and all the peoples and **nations** will acknowledge the authority of the one God.



The messianic reign of peace by E. M. Lilien

But unlike Christian theology, Judaism does not regard the Messiah to be an incarnation of God; the Messiah is entirely human. Still, there are many supernatural elements, both subtle and overt, to Jewish Messianism.

Because the doctrine of the Messiah is based on ambiguous biblical texts, there are multiple, at times conflicting, traditions about him.

In the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, there is a tradition of *two* messiahs, a priestly and a royal one, "the messiahs of **Aaron** and of Israel." There are parallels to this in **apocalyptic literature** and even some faint echoes in rabbinic literature. Reflecting the priestly bias found in other books of the DSS, the Priestly or Aaronide Messiah is treated as superior to the Royal Messiah, a theme that does not carry over into rabbinic traditions. There are also a number of other messianic figures mentioned in the **Qumran** texts. One entire DSS text, the Messianic Apocalypse (4Q521), is devoted to messianic teachings.

There is also a minor tradition about a second Messiah, descending from the line of **Joseph**. This messianic figure is usually designated the Messiah ben Ephraim (after Joseph's eldest son). This figure is presented as the commander of the messianic army (S o S R. 30:4). In most versions of the "two messiahs" tradition, the Messiah ben Ephraim dies in battle, only to be avenged and resurrected by the Messiah ben David (Suk. 52b; *Sefer Hechalot; Sefer*

Zerubbabel). One text even argues there will be no less than seven messiahs. At least one Talmudic Sage expressed doubts about the whole concept of an eschatological Messiah (Sanh. 98b).

While the concepts of a priestly Messiah and a Messiah ben Ephraim do not completely vanish from rabbinic traditions, the overwhelming interest of rabbinic literature is upon the Davidic Messiah, or "King Messiah." In his commentary on the messianic tradition, **Maimonides** completely elides the **Messiah** ben Joseph.

Though the "name" of the Messiah has been known since before **Creation** (PR 31:10, 33: 6), he is still a product of human procreation, so in every generation there are potential messiahs among us, awaiting the right conditions to be revealed:

> He [Joshua ben Levi] once asked Elijah: "When will the Messiah come?" Elijah replied: "Go and ask him himself." "And by what sign may I recognize him?" "He is sitting among the poor, who are afflicted with disease; all of them untie and retie [the bandages of their wounds] all at once, whereas he unties and re-bandages each wound separately, thinking, perhaps I shall be wanted [to appear as the Messiah] and I must not be delayed." Joshua thereupon went to the Messiah and greeted him: "Peace unto you, master and teacher!" He replied, "'Peace unto you, son of Levi." "When will you come, master?" "Today." He returned to Elijah … and said: "He spoke falsely to me. For he said he would come 'today' and he has not come." Elijah responded: "This is what he meant [he was quoting Scriptures]! 'Today—if you would but hearken to His voice.' " (Ps. 95:7; Sanh. 98a paraphrased; also see Lam. R. 1:51)

Remarkably, the Messiah is the descendant of several "unusual" relationships; through his great-grandmother Ruth, he is a product of the incestuous union of Lot and his daughters (Gen. 19:30–37) and through his great-grandfather Boaz, he is the offspring of Tamar's act of prostitution (Gen. 38:1–30). In the **Zohar**, the Messiah is simultaneously a physical descendant of David *and* David reincarnated (I:82b).

The King Messiah will appear on the ninth of Av, the day that Israel mourns the destruction of the Temple. According to **Talmud** Yevamot 62a, the Messiah cannot come until every **soul** that is destined to be born is born, a legend that foreshadows Franz Kafka's statement that the Messiah will not come until he is

no longer needed. Varied (and somewhat contradictory) criteria for the coming of the Messiah are given by various Sages in Sanhedrin 98a–b.

Different names derived from Scripture were offered as the proper name of the Messiah, such as Menachem (Comforter) and Immanuel (God is with us), but most Jews simply speak of the *Mashiach ben David* (Messiah, son of David) or *Mashiach ha-Melech* (King Messiah).

There are two very different scenarios concerning the advent of the Messiah: a conflict-driven vision of the end (the “David” typology) and a peaceful, yet radically transformative, unfolding (the “Solomon” typology). The first idea, that there will be a cataclysmic war accompanying the advent of the Messiah, first emerges in the biblical book of Zechariah and the apocalyptic literature of Greco-Roman times. Early rabbinic literature does not emphasize this aspect of the messianic traditions. But by the Middle Ages, perhaps influenced by Christian **eschatology**, the theme of a war at the end of time once again becomes a prominent feature of Jewish Messianism. The biblical tradition of the apocalyptic Gog and Magog reemerges, while for the first time Armilus, a mysterious Antichrist-like figure, appears as a character in messianic accounts. Maimonides incorporates both typologies in his messianic writings (*MT,* Hilchot Melachim 11; *Commentary to the Mishnah,* Laws of Repentance 11.2).

There are a number of mystical testimonies, beginning with Joshua ben Levi and continuing on to the **Baal Shem Tov**, of personal encounters with the Messiah during mystical **ascent**.

All Jewish holidays, **prayers** , and **rituals** have a messianic dimension to them. Today there are two major veins of thought about the Messiah. Traditionalists still hold to the notion of the Messiah as a single person. Many liberals, drawing upon mystical traditions, teach that the whole **Body** of the Jewish people is the Messiah and it is our collective efforts that will bring the world to its final reconciliation.

Certain periods of Jewish history (the Second Temple period; the Napoleonic Wars; after the 1967 Six Day War) have been more susceptible to messianic excitements and expectations. There are many figures in Jewish history that have had messianic ambitions and pretensions. The most famous include **Jesus** of Nazareth, Simon bar Kochba, David Reubeni, Abraham Abulafia, **Isaac Luria**, **Chayyim Vital** , Shabbatai Tzvi, Nachman of Bratzlav, Moses Luzzato, Joel Titelbaum (the first Satmar Rebbe), and Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe). Chasids seem particularly inclined to see their own

rebbes as either messianic contenders or messianic precursors. Yet all have failed to fulfill the messianic prophecies.

Messiah ben Joseph: (alt. Messiah ben Ephraim). The military leader of the messianic armies. The idea that there would be two messiahs at the End of Days apparently develops out the **Dead Sea Scrolls** tradition that there would be multiple messiahs (4Q175). The idea is first explicitly articulated in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs and appears in the **Talmud** (Suk. 52a–b; J. Suk. 5.2), the Targum, and in Sefer Zerubbabel, where the Messiah ben Joseph is slain in battle and the Messiah ben David completes the redemptive struggle. The figure is discarded in later Midrashim (PdRK 5.9; PR 15), which only name a single messiah. **Maimonides** also ignores the tradition, and his influence on later Jewish messianism largely ends the career of the Messiah ben Joseph in subsequent messianic speculation. *SEE* MESSIAH.

Messiah, Summoning the: Several tales exist in Jewish literature of great mystics and sages trying to "force the hand" of God into sending the Messiah. The **Talmud** (B.M. 85b) teaches that the **prayers** of the righteous have the power to trigger the coming of the Messiah. In another Talmudic passage, the Sage Joshua ben Levi interviewed the Messiah to find out when he would come (he didn't get a satisfactory answer), but it is not until the Middle Ages that there are tales of actual attempts to calculate the coming or theurgically summon the Messiah. Abarbanel, Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev, and Malbim all offered approximate dates for the advent of the Messiah.

Later Jewish literature features a number of stories about efforts to force the Messiah's coming. Perhaps the two most famous tales of Messiah summoning are the attempts of the 15th-century mystic/magician Joseph Della Reina and the 19th-century Chasidic master, Jacob Isaac, the Seer of Lublin. The consequences for both men were disastrous, with Della Reina carried off by **demons** and Jacob Isaac defenestrated.

Messianic Apocalypse: A fragmentary document (4Q521) found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, it provides insight into some of the early Jewish beliefs and traditions concerning the **Messiah**. In it, the Messiah will heal the wounded, restore sight to the blind, and revive the dead—ideas that would later be echoed in the Christian Gospels.

Metal: Because of their mysterious underworldly qualities, metals have been linked to the occult from time immemorial. According to the **Bible**, Tubal-Cain

is the discoverer of metal-smithing (Gen. 4).

All metals, but especially silver and **iron**, play a role in Jewish magical praxis. Silver is the preferred medium for the making of **amulets**, though **gold**, copper, and lead also can be used in specific cases (ShR). **Sefer Raziel** also requires that plates of silver and gold be used for protective spells. Often it requires the casting away or the destruction of the inscribed plate to trigger its power. Iron, too, has special anti-demonic properties. Copper amulets, inscribed with the name of a missing person and buried at four compass points, will bring word of their whereabouts. Copper plates worn under the heels drive away wild beasts.

Metatron: (מטטרון). A **Sar** (Princely, Chieftain Angel) who features prominently in Jewish esoteric literature. The name "Metatron" itself is a puzzle, being either a Greek derived word meaning meta-thronos, "beyond [behind] the throne" or meta-tetra, "beyond the four [Angels of the Countenance]," or the Latin metator, "guide." Less plausible is the argument that it is a corrupted form of the Persian God Mithras. Intriguingly, **gematria** reveals that one spelling of his name has the same numeric value as the divine title Shaddai.

Metatron has many other names and titles. Among the most common are Sar ha-Panim (Prince of the Countenance), Sar ha-Olam (Prince of the World), ha-Naar (the Youth), Marei de-Gadpei, (Master of Wings), and Yahoel. The very name "Metatron" is spelled differently in different documents. In the Merkavah traditions we learn that Metatron has twelve names, corresponding to the twelve tribes. This may account for why there are so many overlapping names and titles in the Metatron traditions (Sanh. 38b; Zohar I:21a).

Metatron's place in the angelic host is truly unique for several reasons. So exalted is his status that in some sources he is referred to as the "Lesser YHVH":

> A heretic challenged Rabbi Idit: It is written, "[God] said to Moses, 'Go up to YHVH' {Ex. 24:1}. [Since God was speaking], it ought to say 'Go up to Me!' " Rabbi Idit answered: [YHVH] here refers to Metatron, whose name is the same as the name of his master. As it is written, "Behold, I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way … My name is in him." (Ex. 23:20–21; Sanh. 38b)

He is also unique in that he alone among the **angels** sits upon a throne, as does God. So exalted is his status that in some sources he is referred to as the "Lesser YHVH" (Yev. 16b; Sanh. 38b). Because of this, Elisha ben Abuyah mistakes Metatron for a god and concludes there are "two powers in **heaven**":

> What happened [to make Elisha ben Abuyah deny the oneness of God]? He

> had a vision of Metatron, who had received permission to sit and write down the merits of the Jewish people. He said: We have learned that on High there is no sitting … Perhaps there are two Powers! [The celestial order] demoted Metatron and beat him with sixty whips of fire. They said to him: When you saw [ben Abuyah], why did you not stand up? Then they gave him permission to erase the merits of Elisha ben Abuyah. (Chag. 15a)

The other remarkable fact about Metatron is that he was once human—the antediluvian hero **Enoch** (Gen. 5; *Jubilees* 4:23; *Sefer Hechalot* 12:5). In III Enoch, Metatron describes to Rabbi Ishmael how he was transubstantiated from mortal to angelic form: Under the direction of **Michael**and **Gabriel** he grew in size until his body filled the whole universe (signaling a reversal of the "fall" of **Adam Kadmon**). He sprouted seventy-two wings (for each of the seventy-two **names of God**), grew 365,000 luminous eyes (indicating he had become omniscient, symbolized by acquiring one thousand eyes for each day of the year), and his material body burned away to be replace with a form of pure **fire**. According to the **Zohar**, he has the appearance of a rainbow (1:7a). Finally, he is given a **crown** resembling the crown worn by God.

Metatron has a very prominent role in **Hechalot** literature, where he appears as a guide to human adepts visiting heaven, (except in Hechalot Rabbati, where that role is filled by Anafiel). At times Metatron is associated with the supernal Mishkan, and is described as the High **priest** in the heavenly **Temple**, a role ascribed to Michael in other texts:

> When the Holy Blessed One told Israel to set up the Mishkan [the portal sanctuary] He indicated to the ministering angels that they also should make a Mishkan, and when the one below was erected the other was erected on high. The latter was the tabernacle of the Naar (Youth) whose name was Metatron, and there he offers up the souls of the righteous to atone for Israel in the days of their exile. The reason then why it is written et ha-Mishkan, [The direct object marker et is read as "with", implying that there is something else unstated that was built with the desert sanctuary] is because another Mishkan was erected simultaneously with it. In the same way it says, The place, Adonai, which You have made for You to dwell in, the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established [the parallelism of "place" and "sanctuary" is interpreted to mean two sanctuaries]. (Ex. 25:17; Num. R. 12:12).

The Zohar attempts to reconcile all these conflicting traditions:

> From this we see that the Holy One, blessed be He, actually gave Moses all the arrangements and all the shapes of the Tabernacle, each in its appropriate manner, and that he saw Metatron ministering to the High Priest within it. It may be said that, as the Tabernacle above was not erected until the Tabernacle below had been completed, that "youth" (Metatron) could not have served above before Divine worship had taken place in the earthly Tabernacle … Moses saw a mirroring of the whole beforehand, and also Metatron, as he would be later when all was complete … It should not be thought, however, that Metatron himself ministers; the fact is, that the Tabernacle belongs to him, but Michael, the High Priest, that serves there, within the Metatron's Tabernacle, mirroring the function of the Supernal High Priest above, serving within that other Tabernacle, that hidden one which never is revealed, which is connected with the mystery of the world to come. There are two celestial Tabernacles: the one, the supernal concealed Tabernacle, and the other, the Tabernacle of the Metatron. And there are also two priests: the one is the primeval Light, and the other Michael, the High Priest below. (II:159a, translation from the *Soncino Zohar*)

In Sefer Zerubbabel, he is explicitly identified with Michael. He also functions as the heavenly scribe, writing 366 books. He also teaches **Torah** to the righteous dead in the Yeshiva on High (A.Z. 3b; *SGE*). He is involved in events on **Earth** as well as in heaven. He led Abraham through Canaan, delivered Isaac from his father's knife, Wrestled with **Jacob**, led the Israelites in the desert, rallied **Joshua**, and revealed the End of Times to Zerubbabel. Even so, he is only rarely adjured in angel summoning **incantations**. One magical book, *Sefer ha-Cheshek*, is devoted to the power of his seventy-two names.

He continues his function as heavenly tour guide in medieval works like Gedulat Moshe, though Metatron does not enjoy the singular prominence in later **Kabbalah** that he does in early Merkavah **mysticism**.

In the Zohar, Metatron receives his most complex treatment. It is difficult to fully understand the Zohar's multivalent and allusive teachings regarding Metatron, which may reflect the many hands that contributed to it. He is a manifestation of **Shekhinah** (I:179b), the first "offspring" of the supernal union of God's feminine and masculine aspects (I: 143a, 162a–b). As such he is the personification of the lower **sefirot**, an idea obliquely alluded to in this description of Metatron as the "staff" of Moses [i.e., the instrument he uses to deliver the people]:

> Similarly of Moses it is written, “And the staff of God was in his hand” [the staff that delivered the Israelites and smote the Egyptians]. This rod is Metatron, from one side of whom comes life and from the other death.” [life and salvation flows from the “right” side of the sefirot, death and severity from the “left” side]. (Zohar 1:27a)

Later kabbalistic traditions seemingly lose interest in Metatron, and he rarely features in metaphysical speculation after the high Middle Ages. *SEE* SUMMONING.

Metempsychosis: Transmigration of **souls**. *SEE* REINCARNATION.

Metoposcopy: (חכמת הפרצוף/*Chochmat ha-Partzuf*). “Face Augury.” A number of ancient, medieval, and modern texts have reported on this technique for deriving occult information from studying other people’s foreheads (DSS 4Q186; Hakkarat Panim l’Rabbi Yishmael; *Zohar* II:71a–78a; Sefer Ruach ha-Kodesh, 15–22). This talent is especially credited to **Isaac Luria**. According to **Chayyim Vital** , Luria literally saw letters emanating from the **soul** on the faces of other people. *SEE* DEAD SEA SCROLLS; DIVINATION; FACE.

Mezuzah: (מזוזה). “Doorpost.” In order to fulfill the commandment that Israel put “the commandments I give you this day … upon your doorposts (*mezuzot*) and upon your gates” (Deut. 6), the practice arose of placing a container filled with Scriptural passages on the doorframe of a Jewish home.

Doorways have always been understood to be liminal zones between the protected space of the home and the vulnerable outside, where malevolent spirits move freely. The practice of placing a text of power in a tube at the doorway closely parallels the Greco-Roman practice of **amulets** making (*ShR*).

Rabbinic literature makes reference to a mezuzah being used as an amulet, though many prominent Sages objected to treating it as such (Gen. R. 35:3; A.Z. 11a). By the Middle Ages, a number of Kabbalistic and talismanic additions started to appear on mezuzot—an atbash code version of the first sentence of the Sh’ma, *Kozu be-Machsaz Kozu*, is usually written on the reverse side of the biblical text. Angelic names, **hexagrams**, **magic squares**, **fish**, and other protective symbols are also incorporated into some mezuzot. The Chasids are emphatic in their belief that mezuzot have a critical role in keeping spirits and bad fortune out of a house (*Shivhei ha-BeSHT* 186).

A relatively recent phenomenon is the actual *wearing* of mezuzot on the **Body**, often without a text, as a protective charm. This practice evidently arose in the

modern era when Jewish mothers started sending their sons to serve in gentile armies. Now mezuzah-like charms are also made to be put into cars, boats, and airplanes.

Michael: (מיכאל). "[One] Who Is Godlike." A princely **angel**, the **guardian angels** of the people **Israel**. Michael first appears to **Daniel** (chapter 10) as the defender of Jews, a role that he remains closely identified with in rabbinic literature. This is why he also functions as the High **priest** in the ideal heavenly **Temple**, for he is constantly making offerings before God on Israel's behalf. He is also frequently invoked on protective amulets. Sometimes he is identified with the element of **fire**, at other times with the element of air.[1]

He is one of the four angels (along with **Gabriel**, **Uriel**, and **Raphael**) who attend upon God's throne. He is one of the generals commanding the **host of heaven**. He is one of the angels God sends to discipline the **fallen angel** (I Enoch 10), and he will play a prominent role in the eschatological battle at the end of time (DDS, *Sefer Melchizedek*). He is made of snow, air, and/or light (Deut. R. 5:12; DSS War Scroll). He is accompanied everywhere by the **Shekhinah** (Ex. R. 2:5). He holds the keys to heaven and escorts the righteous **souls** to God's presence (III *Baruch*). Sefer Zerubbabel identifies him with **Metatron**. He is also the "Angel of the right [side]" of the sefirot (Zohar I:98a).

As an angel of revelation, Michael has had many earthly manifestations and he is linked to many of the encounters between biblical figures and the divine, even if he is not mentioned by name in the biblical text: witnessing the **marriage** of **Adam** and **Eve** (Gen. 2), the visitation of **Abraham** (Gen. 18), the rescue of Abraham from Nimrod's fiery furnace (Gen. R. 44:13), and accompanying Abraham's servant Eliezer (Gen. R. 59:10). Michael intervenes to prevent Laban from killing **Jacob** (PdRE 36). He is the fiery manifestation in the burning bush (Ex. 2:5), descends with God on **Mount Sinai** (Gen. R. 2:34), and accompanies **Moses's Body** for his **burial** (Deut. R. 11:10). He appears to **Isaiah** (Ber. 4b). He was the angel that smote the armies of Sennachrib (Ex. R. 18.5). He assisted Esther in her struggle with Haman (Est. R. 7:12).

Michael also serves God outside the context of Israel. He established the place where Rome would be built (S of S R. 1:6). Michael is frequently paired with Gabriel in rabbinic texts.

There is a fragmentary text among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the "Michael" text, in which Michael addresses the angelic host, which is the only Jewish record of Michael speaking in the first person.

1. M. Verman, M. *The Books of Contemplation: Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources*. (New York: SUNY

Press, 1992), 206.

Microcosm: (עולם קטן). The belief that the key structures of the universe are replicated and epitomized in critical entities, such as the **tabernacle** (Ex. R. 35:6; Num. R. 12:13) and/or the human form (Zohar I: 186b; *Sefer Rimmonim* 268). In the case of the human, the idea is most often expressed in the belief that **Adam Kadmon** , the primordial human, once filled and was coequal with the universe (Gen. R. 3:7, 19:8–9). The mirror side of this belief is that the universe is, in a very real sense, anthropomorphic. The idea that the human being, in particular, encapsulates the universe is very appealing to the mystic because it implies that one may draw closer to God by going deeper into oneself. *SEE* BODY; GODHEAD; IMAGE, DIVINE

Microscript: Tiny lines of scriptural verses made into images, faces, and symbols. Microscript is a common feature of paper **amulets**. The **psalms** (especially Pss. 67, 91, and 121) are the texts most used in microscript amulets. Protective images most often constructed out of micro-script include **menorahs**, **eyes**, **faces**, **hand**, and the Magen David.

Midnight: (חצות). In Judaism, midnight is a propitious time for **prayer**, **study**, and **ritual**. This is based on Psalm 119:62, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee." At midnight, the ascending power of **evil** is turned back. God attends to the righteous dead at this time (Zohar I:92a–b). For these reasons, midnight is an auspicious time to begin **Torah** study (Chag. 12b; Ber. 3b). In Chasidic spiritual practice, there is the custom of Tikkun Chatzot, the Midnight Mending for the destruction of the **Temple**, with the hope it will speed its restoration. This is mainly observed in the winter, when nights are longest (*Likkutai Moharan* I). *SEE* BERUCHIM, ABRAHAM; DARKNESS; NIGHT

Midrash: (מדרש). Rabbinic commentaries on the **Bible**, characterized by their concentrated interest in the close reading of phrases, words, even letters, often at the expense of the contextual meaning. At the same time, Midrash is daring, eclectic, and highly imaginative in its interpretations. As a result, it becomes a repository for many fabulous and supernatural traditions.

There are many documents of the Midrash. Among the most fruitful texts for those interested in Jewish fantastic traditions are Genesis Rabbah, Leviticus Rabbah, Midrash Tehillim, Midrash Konen, Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, and Yalkut Shimoni. Some Kabbalistic works, particularly the Bahir and the **Zohar**, are partly written in the style of a mystical Midrash.

Midrash Eleh Ezkarah: "Midrash 'These things I Remember.' " A martyrology of the ten martyrs. It contains accounts of their great piety and extraordinary powers.

Midrash ha-Gadol: An anthology of later Midrashic material. It incorporates many later rabbinic legends.

Midrash ha-Nelam: "Esoteric Midrash." The first part of the **Zohar**, it is a mystical commentary on Genesis and Exodus.

Midrash Konen: A Midrash on **Creation**. It popularizes many esoteric non-biblical teachings concerning Jewish cosmogony.

Midrash Mishlei: "Midrash on Proverbs." This quasi-Midrash includes some longer narrative passages, such as the stories of **Solomon** and the Queen of Sheba and the death of Rabbi Akiba.

Midrash Rabbah: The great collection of classical Midrashim on the five books of Moses. There is a "Rabbah" for each book of the Pentateuch. Each has fantastic elements in it, though Genesis Rabbah, with the many stories of the mythic origins of the world, is the richest.

Midrash Samuel: A medieval collection of Midrashim and legends about the Sages.

Midrash Tanchuma: A collection of medieval Midrashim on the five books of Moses. It has many longer narrative elements. There are two major versions, the other being known as "Midrash Tanchuma (Buber)" for the modern scholar who discovered and published it.

Midrash Tehillim: "Midrash on Psalms." An early medieval Midrash collection focused on **psalms**, it includes many supernatural traditions about **David** and other biblical heroes. It is sometimes printed with Midrash Samuel.

Miflaot Elohim: A text devoted to medical **astrology** and **magic** attributed to either Naftali Katz or Yoel ben Uri Halperin.

Mikvah or Mikvaot: (hwqm). "[Ritual] Pool." *SEE* IMMERSION ; PURITY OR PURIFICATION; WATER

Milchamot Adonai, Sefer: A lost book mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures (Num. 21:14–15).

Milham Bird: A mythical creature that is a hybrid of a **bird**, a crocodile, and a **lion**. It refused to join **Adam** and **Eve** in **eating** from the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. For that obedience, it is immortal and dwells in the city of **Luz** (Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* 1:28–9). *SEE* PHOENIX; ZIZ.

Ministering Angels: (מלאכי השרית/*Malachei ha-Shareit*). Personal **guardian angels**. Divided into those who minister to God on high and those who serve humanity below, the latter can help, support, and protect individuals, though their effectiveness varies according to circumstance. They cannot prevent their mortal wards from committing willful sins, however, and such behavior actually diminishes their powers (PdRE 15; *SCh* 1162). The ministering angels that attend upon Jews over the **Sabbath** are welcomed with the song Shalom Aleichem (*Siddur*).

Minyan: (מנין). "Quorum." Ten Jews is the minimum number needed to constitute a "community." A minyan is needed to convene a public worship service, or to serve as a representative body (Ber. 47b, 6a–b, 21b). The number ten is derived from the ten spies who determined the Land of **Israel** was too dangerous to invade and the ten righteous men God needed to find in **Sodom** in order to spare the city (Num. 14:27; Gen. 18:32). The **Shekhinah** joins ten men gathered in **prayer** (Ps. 14:28; MdRI Ba-Chodesh 11). **Kabbalah** finds significance in the fact that the number mirrors the number of **sefirot**:

> The Shekhinah arrives early at the sanctuary … Blessed is the man who is among the first [ten] to arrive at the synagogue. For by them consummation is completed and they are the first to be sanctified by the Shekhinah before any others, as has been explained. Ten should arrive at the synagogue at the same time rather than separately so as not to delay the completion of the limbs [of Adam Kadmon] just as man was created by God all at once and all his limbs were perfected together. (Zohar III:126a; also see II:164b)

There are situations when a minyan is also required to deal with a paranormal phenomenon, such as the **exorcism** of a possessed person (*Zera ha-Kodesh*).

Miracle: (נס/*Nes*, also *Fela; Mofet; Ot*). A paranormal sign of wonder. Strictly speaking, miracles are events that cannot be explained by normal causality, but are instead credited to divine intervention into the normal course of the world.

There are many such signs and wonders recorded throughout Jewish literature.

The **Bible** makes a point of identifying God as the source of all miraculous feats, even when the miracle occurs through the agency of a human being. **Moses** is explicitly rebuked for having failed to acknowledge God while performing the miracle of **water** at Meribah (Num. 20). Other paranormal actions taken without divine sanction, such as the snake charming of the Egyptian wizards (Ex. 7), are mere **magic**.

The **Talmud** is less stringent in ascribing miracles directly to God; it assumes that when a Sage or godly Jew performs a wonder that power comes from God, even if it is not expressly said so. By the same token, for all their blasé attitudes toward the frequent supernatural events that happened around them, the Sages pointedly observe, "One must not rely on miracles" (Kid. 39b; Shab. 32a; Pes. 50b), certainly not as a source of revelation (B.M. 59b). Some voices in the **Midrash** are uncomfortable with the concept of the interruption of normal causality, arguing instead that all the miracles reported in the Scripture were actually natural events pre-programmed into **Creation** to coincide with critical moments in the history of Israel (AdRN 5:6; PdRE 19).

While Jewish rational philosophers have also attempted to "naturalize" the miraculous, many Jewish pietists and mystics accept the reality of miracles with little evident angst or reservations. The Chasids, particularly, credit their rebbes with performing many miracles (*ShB* 21–23; *Or ha-Emet* 55b; Midrash Pinchas 16:5a).

Miriam: Prophetess and sister of **Moses** and **Aaron**. The Sages claim she had multiple names and titles, including Helah, Azubah, Efrat, and Naarah (*Ex. R.* 1:21). She was the third member of the prophetic triumphirate that led the Children of Israel through the **exorcism** (Mic. 6:4). Unlike her brothers Aaron and Moses, nothing miraculous is explicitly credited to Miriam in the biblical text. She is the unfortunate recipient of a **miracles**, however; an affliction that turns her "white as snow," imposed as a divine punishment for attacking her brother's authority (Num. 12).

The fabulous traditions of Miriam post-biblically are piquant but minimal. The Sages claim she had multiple names and titles, including Helah, Azubah, Efrat, Naarah, and Puah (Ex. R. 1:21). Through her name *Puah* ("One who coos") we learn she was one of the midwives who spared the lives of the Israelite newborn males. She prophesizes the coming of her brother as the deliverer of the Israelites (Meg. 14a; MdRI 10; Ex. R. 21:13). Through her, God manifests the

miracle of the well of Miriam (Tan. 9a), a supernatural **water** source that appeared whenever the Israelites encamped during the forty-year sojourn in the desert. The death of Miriam at the end of the book of Numbers causes the well to disappear (RaSHI's comment on Numbers 20:2). The Sages credit this deprivation with causing the confrontation between Moses and the people at Meribah.

In one tradition, she is identified as the mother (or grandmother) of Bezalel, the mystical artisan:

> Bezalel's wisdom was through Miriam's merit … Miriam received royalty and … wisdom [prophecy]. She produced Bezalel, and [eventually] from her issued David. (Ex. R. 1:17, 48:4)

Her death served as an atonement for the entire generation of the Exodus (PdRK 26:11), she died by the **kiss** of God (B.B. 17a; Zohar II:151b), and her **Body** remains perfectly preserved to this day. In the afterlife she oversees one of the six palaces in paradise where the righteous souls of women reside (*SGE;* Zohar III:167a–b).

Mirror: (ראי/*Rei;* מראה/*Marah*). Mirrors have occupied an interesting place in human thought. A *marah* means both a mirror and a vision. A mirror is both a kind of window and a buffer between worlds. More than just a means of seeing the self, they are often an archetype for a portal between mortal and immortal realms, or ironically, a means to see "beyond" the self ("Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?" is followed by the power to see unseen and distant things).

Given that the **tabernacle** and **Temple** were the places of divine vision and encounter, places to "see the face of the Eternal" (Deut. 16:16; Ps. 11), it is surprising that more early interpreters of the **Torah** didn't make symbolic hay out of Exodus 38:8, an explicit reference to mirrors associated with the sanctuary of God:

> He made the laver of copper and its stands of copper, from the mirrors of the women who worked at the opening of the Tent of Meeting.

The laver of copper/bronze used in the Mishkan came from these mirrors, making them "integral" to the cosmic scheme embodied in the Sanctuary and its objects. In a small number of Rabbinic interpretations, these mirrors were not symbols of divine vision, but emblems of female sexuality and the Sages explored its appropriateness both in the sanctuary as the locus of God's holiness

and in the larger divine plan. In Numbers Rabbah, **Moses** selects them specifically because the Israelite women did not use them for "immorality" (i.e., used them to make themselves look more sexually appealing) (Num. R. 9:14). **RaSHI** playfully tweaks this rather puritan **Midrash** by making Moses's prudishness a foil for a more positive view of sexuality:

> From the mirrors [*marot*]—The Israelite women had in their possession mirrors that they would look in when they put on their jewelry. Even these mirrors they did not withhold from the donations to the Tabernacle, and Moses was disgusted with them because the mirrors were made for the evil inclination. God said to [Moses], "Accept the mirrors, for they are more precious to Me than anything else, since with the mirrors the women brought many hosts of children into being." [For] when their husbands were oppressed with slave labor [in Egypt], the women would bring them food and drink, and feed them. They would bring the mirrors with them and each one of the women would look at herself in the mirror with her husband and arouse him, saying "I am more beautiful than you." From this they would make their husbands desire to have sex, and the women became pregnant there, as it says: "Under the apple tree I roused you" (S of S 8:5). And this is why [it calls them] "*marot Tzevaot*" which means "mirrors of multitudes." (RaSHI comment to Ex. 38:8; *Tanchuma* Pekudei 9 has a similar account.)

Kabbalah , by contrast, focuses on the word play of the word *marah*, which means both "mirror" and "vision." Thus *Marot ha-Tzevaot* can be read as "visions/mirrors of the Hosts [of **heaven**]," reminiscent of another esoteric teaching, the "nine shining speculum," or levels of prophetic vision (Num. 11:6–8; Yev. 49b). Thus these "mirrors" associated with the place of **Shekhinah** (the lowest of the **sefirot**, which is the "speculum that does not shine") are apertures for gazing upon degrees of divine light, as Joseph Gikkatilla (13th century) wrote:

> Know that Moses our teacher was greater than all the other prophets, and Moses never used the phrase "YHVH TZVAOT" for his level cleaved to YHVH [alone] and he did not have to look into "mirrors of TZoVOT" (the hosts or legions of women). Thus it is written that Moses our teacher, PBUH, looked into the luminous mirror (Num. 12:8). The other prophets see through an opaque, unfinished mirror "I make myself know to him in a vision [Marea] (Hos. 12:11)" [which] is the essence of Marot Tzevaot … this is also the

essence of the mirrors of Tzevaot that were arrayed around the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.[1]

In later sources, the tenth sefirah, **Malchut** */Shekhinah*, is even dubbed the *Marot ha-Tzevaot*. By the late 13th century there is a book devoted entirely to the Kabbalistic symbolism of these "mirrors." [2] Elsewhere Gikkatilla links the mirrors of Exodus 38:8 to the lower sefirot of Hod (female) and Netzach (male), which are most closely tied to **Prophecy**.

A mirror can be used as a divination device by having a child sit in front of it and looking for figures or objects that convey ominous import. As a buffer, it can be used in divine encounters (RaSHI's commentary, Suk. 45b). **Chayyim Vital** , for example, repeatedly used a mirror to scry **angels** and **demons** , apparently in order to avoid looking them directly in the face (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot* 23, 24). Mirrors can also be used as aids to **meditation**. Because the mirror is an object of vanity, its use can attract the **evil eye**. Scrying mirrors occasionally appear in Chasidic **miracles** tales. *SEE* DIVINATION; SPECULUM; WATER

1. J. Gikkatilla. *Gates of Light: Sha'are Orah*. Translated by A. Weinstein (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994), 119.

2. D. Matt, "David ben Yehudah Hehasid and his Book of Mirrors," *Hebrew Union College Annual* (1980).

Mishkan: (משכן). "Dwelling place." This **tabernacle** was a portable sanctuary built by the Israelites at God's direction. Medieval writers often referred to the **Body** of the righteous as a "mishkan." *SEE* MICROCOSM; RIGHTEOUS, THE

Mitzvah: (מצוה). "Commandment." *SEE* COMMANDMENT.

Mochin: (מוכין). "Mind/Mentality/Consciousness." In medieval **Kabbalah** , the term *Mochin* (or *Mohin*) refers to the stages of mental development that co-exists in both the higher and mortal mind. In the writings based on the teachings of **Zohar** and, later, **Isaac Luria**, mochin refers to the inner intelligence of the divine structures known as **Partzufim**("Countenances"). There are five of these divine countenances, and their interactions give shape to the cosmos. Sometimes presented as synonymous with the **sefirot**, the mochin emerge from the interactions (*zivvugim*, "couplings") of the Partzufim in a manner that is analogous to procreation and birth.[1] They grow and evolve through three stages: *ibbur* (pregnancy), *yenika* or *mochin de-katnut* (narrow or constricted consciousness), and *mochin de-gadlut* (expanded or broadened consciousness).[2] The lower structures of the **Godhead** are fed and nurtured by the mochin that flows to them from the higher one. This idea gives a very explicit and vivid form

to the notion, implicit since the **Bible**, that God is a dynamic, evolutionary, learning being. God's mind, as it were, expands with and through creation.

These states of divine consciousness are channeled from the higher realms into the mortal realms through religious praxis. Performing the **commandments**, even the seemingly inexplicable **ritual** commandments (perhaps especially these) in the most intentional and focused manner possible (with **kavanah**) makes the transfer of this higher consciousness possible. In Lurianic thought, **prayer** is the primary mechanism for the movement of mochin. Filling the world with this God-consciousness is central to the task of **Tikkun**, of rectifying the world in the **divine image**. This is why Jewish prayer is cyclical and statutory—it is like a spiritual pump that must regularly facilitate the movement of this divine force between worlds (*Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*).

This concept gets applied in other ways more specific to the human experience, especially in the Hasidic tradition. Pinchus ben Avraham Abba uses the concepts of katnut and gadlut to distinguish between the religious consciousness that results from **Torah**/**Talmud** study vs. that which results from the study of Zohar.[3] Schnur Zalman of Liadi also describes a human phenomenology of mochin. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev teaches that the person who receives the divine **emanation** of mochin de-gadlut loses all fear of worldly events and is no longer subject to the influences of the Sitra Achra, the evil "other side" of creation (*Kedushat Levi*, parsha Yitro).

This application of the concepts of "restricted" and "expanded" consciousness to the human perspective in turn opens the way for the thoroughly modern use of these idioms by contemporary Jewish writers as a kind of Jewish "New Age" speak for personal spiritual development.[4] *SEE* KATNUT.

1. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 236.

2. Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, 152–153.

3. A. Heschel, *The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov: Studies in Hasidism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 6.

4. D. Pinson, *Meditation and Judaism* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2004), 187.

Modeh Ani: (מודה אני). The *Modeh Ani* ("I give thanks …") **prayer** is a short praise recited immediately upon awakening each morning, ideally while still in bed. The idea of a waking prayer is first referred to in the **Talmud** (Ber. 60b; J. Ber. 80:4), but this form arises out of 16th-century **mysticism**:

I give thanks to You, living and eternal King,
for You have mercifully restored my soul within me;
great is Your faith.

The phrase, “Great is Your faith” is biblical, an abridged version of “they are new every morning, great is Your faith” (Lam. 3:22–23), but what really drives this prayer is the lurianic interpretation of the verse as referring to the **soul’s** nighttime journey out of the body into the higher realms (the Seven Heavens of early Jewish cosmology; the sefirot of medieval mysticism) that also inspires the prayers *Elohai Neshamah* and *Oden LaEl*. Luria and those who follow him, notably Nachman of Bratzlav (*Likkutei Moharan* B. 84), are struck by the literal meaning, which suggests that it is God who has faith. What does God have faith in? That human souls (the “they” in the Lamentations verse) will continue to grow and evolve toward higher levels over the course of its time inhabiting a body. The soul, they argue, departs the body each night and goes to the divine realm called “Faith,” where it undergoes renewal, readied for the trials it will face and growth it will (hopefully) undertake during the waking hours in the Asiyah, the World of Action.

So important is it to recite this prayer immediately upon returning to consciousness that it is composed without the inclusion of any divine names, so that the person does not have to wash or make other spiritual preparations before reciting it.

Molokho, Solomon: Kabbalist and failed **Messiah** (Portuguese, ca. 16th century). Born into a family of Crypto-Jews, Molokho returned to his ancestral faith and immersed himself in mystical studies, including cultivating a **maggid**, a spirit guide. He had numerous excellent adventures with David Reubeni, and eventually proclaimed himself Messiah. He was arrested by the church for his trouble and was eventually burned at the stake for abandoning **Christianity**.

Molten Sea: (ים מוצק/*yam mutzak*). The large **water** reservoir that stood outside the **Temple** in **Jerusalem** (1 Kings 7:23), is one of the most poorly understood features of several iconic structures surrounding the Temple. The description of its exact form is subject to scholarly debate, though it is clearly a curved basin resting on twelve oxen, three facing to each cardinal compass point.

It was seemingly inspired by the laver used by the **priest** ministering in the desert **Mishkan** to purify their hands and feet (2 Chr. 4:6). I say “seemingly” because the dimensions of the *yam mutzak* were such that, unless there was a mechanism not mentioned in the Biblical accounts, it was too big to be used as a basin for **ritual** washing. It is reasonable to argue that it was more symbolic than functional. The medieval **Midrash** states it symbolized “the world,” but this seems like an unsatisfactory interpretation, and a rather awkward one at that.

Kabbalah extracted elaborate meaning from its many features, almost all of them understood to allude to the **sefirot**. In both cases, the explanations seem like retrojections, the imposition of later ideas and concerns on an earlier phenomenon.

The basin has an ancient Near Eastern parallel, the *Apsu* pool, a square tank of holy water that was found in the courtyard of Mesopotamian temples. Apsu is the tellurian "sweetwater sea" (the aquifer) that preceded and supports the **Earth**. Mythologically, the Apsu is the home of Enki/Ea and the wellspring of creation. In one version of Mesopotamian mythology, Apsu is personified as the companion of Tiamat, the salt water **sea** dragon, and is destroyed by Ea. Besides being a **purification** device, the Apsu tank probably conveyed to the entering worshipper that this sanctuary was the residence of divinity. It may be there were rituals specifically associated with the tank.

So perhaps the Molten Sea was meant to symbolize the mythic cosmos in a similar way. To get at the specific Israelite meaning, one must begin with the name. Usually translated as "molten sea" or "cast sea," based on the adjective tzuk, "melted," this translation is reinforced elsewhere in Scriptures when it is referred to as the "bronze sea." Straight forward, but detached from any clear intellectual context. Is it a "sea" to say the world is like the sea? That's a lot of bronze for an odd analogy. Yet the word *mutzak* could also be derived from the **Hebrew** noun *tzok*, meaning "constraint" or "distress." From this we could plausibly call it the "constrained sea" or "bound sea."

This latter translation makes a certain sense, because one of the great mythic acts of the God of Israel is the taming of **chaos**, as embodied by water. God sets the boundaries of the water, allowing the land to appear (Gen. 1:9; Pss. 74:13, 104:7–8; Job 38:8–11). The bound waters are emblematic of cosmos triumphing over chaos. Thus the Yam Mutzak visually encapsulates for the Israelite worshipper the drama of divine creation just as he approaches the Temple, the Edenic structure with its **cherubs**, **trees**, flowers, and the seat of Divine Presence. The Molten Sea, then, was likely part of a mythic narrative told in architecture.

As for the oxen, bulls were popular and widely used symbols of divine power. The Israelite northerners thought the bull to be a suitable symbol for the God of Israel despite, or perhaps because of, the whole golden calf incident (1 Kings 12:28–31). It is a story told, with much contempt from a Southern perspective. Yet for the modern reader it's a subtle distinction —are two calves in the sanctuary more abhorrent than twelve oxen just outside? Why are cherubs cool,

but bulls out of bounds, as it were? It seems at some point, both groups used cows as a **totem** for the God of Israel. And at some point, this icon became problematic. And the twelve represent the twelve tribes of Israel, in which case the oxen symbolize Israel's role in sustaining the cosmos through **sacrifices** and fidelity to God. Alternately, the twelve oxen could present the twelve houses of the **zodiac**, the celestial order that surrounds the world.

Moon: (לבנה/*Levanah*, also *Yareach*). The moon, as object and symbol, is central to Judaism. Our sacred **calendar** is based on its monthly cycle, as the Hebrew **Bible** reveals with its frequent references to keeping time via "new moons and Shabbats." From biblical times, it has been believed that the moon has influence over humanity (Ps. 121). The ancient terms used in describing its cycle, *ibbur* and *moled*, "conceived" and "born," suggest that the Israelites believed it to be a living entity. The **Talmud** believes that the moon has a consciousness, or animating genius. The principle **angel** that governs the moon is **Gabriel**, though some texts identify another angel, such as Yarchiel, as its controlling genius.

According to the **Midrash**, the moon began as a celestial luminary equal to the **sun**, but God reduced it to a lesser light because of its arrogance. God did, however, compensate it for the loss by giving the moon a greater role in human affairs. Thus the moon is crucial in determining the Jewish calendar. According to the aggadah, its original glory will be restored in the Messianic Era (Chul. 60b).

According to the Sages, the moon is a symbol of Israel, for though both wax and wane, they also both endure eternally. Like the moon, the Jewish people often find themselves outshone by more powerful **nations** and empires (which the Midrash compares to the sun) who have dominated us. Yet like the moon, Jews always return; and visible or not, we are always strong spiritually (Gen. R. 6:2; *SCh* 1154). It is a reminder of God's authority. The crescent moon is the same shape as the **Hebrew** letter kaf, which is also the first letter of the word *kisei*, "throne" (B.M. 2:406). Because of these associations, Jewish esoteric tradition imagines the moon to be a visible sign of God's throne (and therefore, God's sovereignty) set in the sky. It is also a symbol of **women**. According to the Talmud, Jewish women are granted an extra monthly day without labor, the **new moon**, because of their loyalty to God during the golden calf incident (Tanh. Ki Tissa 19; PdRE 45; Tosafot; R.H. 23a).

In the teachings of Jewish **mysticism**, the natural order in "World of Action" (**Asiyah**), is a reverberation of the divine structures. That includes the most

powerful forces in human life: **love** and **sex**. The moon in its beauty signifies the **Shekhinah**, the feminine dimension of God (S of S R. 4:5; Suk. 29a; Zohar I:236b).

Rabbi Abaye says in the Talmud that to look upon the moon during the blessing of the new moon, it is as if that person has received the face of the Shekhinah (Sanh. 42a). Its waxing and waning signifies the cycle of the *hieros gamos*, the cosmic union of the male and female principles On High that lovingly nurtures creation below.

Moonlight repels **demons** (Ber. 43b). Lunar **eclipses** are considered a bad **omen** and a sign of God's anger over moral lapses. There is a theurgic **ritual** preserved in the Talmud, intended to ensure good fortune, called the Blessing for the New Moon.

Medieval Jewish works of astrology list a variety of human spheres that the moon affects with its waxing and waning. The ideal time for sexual intercourse is the new moon, because it would have a positive influence on a child conceived at that time. The best time to construct an **amulets** is determined by the phases of the moon; the same is true for performing certain medical procedures. *SEE* ASTROLOGY; ZODIAC.

Moon, New: *SEE* NEW MOON.

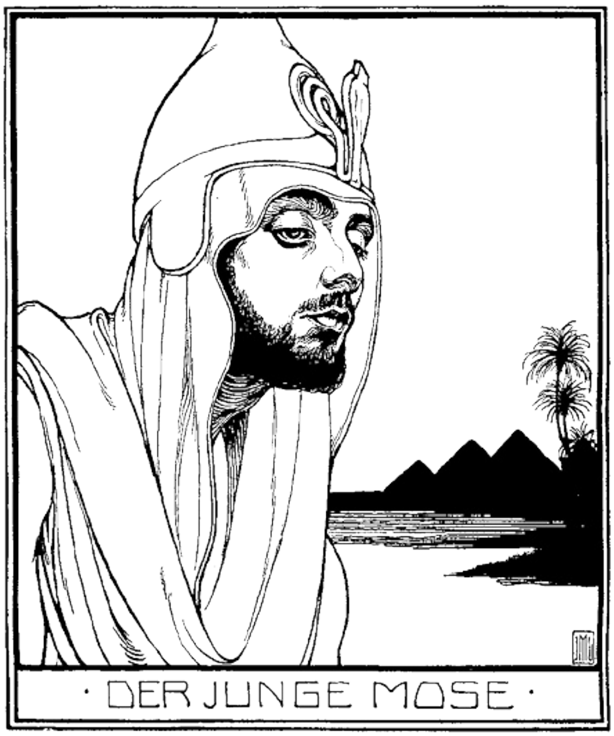
Mordecai: The uncle of Esther, the Jewish queen of Persia (Esth. 2). According to the Sages, Mordecai was a **prophet**. According to legend, when he took in his infant niece, Esther, God caused his **breasts** to issue milk, and he nursed the child himself. He lived four hundred years and spoke every **language** in the world (*Sefer Yuhasin*).

Moriah, Mount: "Mountain of Vision." The **mountain** mentioned in Genesis 22:1–22 where **Abraham** and **Isaac** were tried by God. *SEE* ZION, MOUNT.

Moses: Redeemer, lawgiver, and greatest of all the **prophets**. His sister **Miriam** prophesied the birth of Moses to her father Amram. The diviners of Pharaoh also detected the threat of the newborn liberator, which is what triggered the killing of the Israelite infants (Sot. 11b–12a). Not only was Moses exceptionally beautiful, he could walk at birth (*Sefer ha-Yashar*). In one tradition, Moses was born completely circumcised. In a variant tradition, when his **circumcision** was performed the room was filled with divine light. When Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh, found the basket holding the baby, she was cured of leprosy the moment she touched it (Ex. R. 1:27).

Angels guarded the child during his time in Pharaoh's court (Ex. R. 1:28), at times protecting him from his own precocious **wisdom**. When Pharaoh learned that young Moses killed one of his taskmasters, he ordered him beheaded. God, however, turned his neck to marble. The angel **Michael** then immediately teleported him to safety in Midian.

A medieval tradition found in *Sefer ha-Yashar* relates that Moses fled first to Cush, where he became a general in the army and married the daughter of the king. He himself became king of Cush after the death of his father-in-law. His own wife later deposed him in a coup d'état and he was forced to flee to Midian.



Young Moses by E. M. Lilien

Once he was welcomed into the home of **Jethro**, he discovered a marvelous **rod** implanted in Jethro's courtyard. When Moses was able to pull the rod from its place, Jethro knew he was the man destined to liberate Israel and immediately gave his daughter **Zipporah** to Moses in **marriage**.

While Moses was returning to **Egypt**, **Satan** attacked Moses in the form of a **serpent**. The attack was possible because Moses was spiritually vulnerable, having neglected to circumcise his eldest son. The serpent swallowed Moses up to his penis. His wife Zipporah recognized the significance of this, so she immediately circumcised the boy, causing Satan to withdraw (Ned. 31b–32a).

Once back in Egypt, the angel **Gabriel** teleported Moses past the guards and brought him before Pharaoh (Yalkut Shemot 175).

When Moses ascended Sinai, he was garbed in a cloak made of rainbow, providing him with a prism through which to view all of **heaven** (Zohar II:99a). Another tradition described him garbed in the **Holy Spirit** (Yoma 4a). In Gedulat Moshe, he was briefly transubstantiated into fire. In yet another version, he rode to the top of Sinai in a **cloud** (BhM 1:58).

From the top of Sinai, Moses was drawn up into heaven. He dwelt there forty days, fed by the **glory** of the **Shekhinah**. Though the angels were hostile to his presence, God granted Moses authority over them, a tradition that forms the basis for the occult belief that Jews can summon angels (Shab. 88b; Sanh. 109a; Gen. R. 118:6; PR 20; *ChdM*). In one version of this legend, Moses actually has to slay Kemuel, a **guardian angels** at the gates of heaven in order to obtain the **Torah**. With the giving of the Torah, Moses was healed of his speech impediment.

In perhaps the most extraordinary legend concerning Moses, the Midrash interprets one of his titles, *Ish Elohim*, to mean "husband of God" (a perfectly valid, if exceptional, interpretation of the phrase, which is normally translated as "man of God"). As a kind of "consort" to God, Moses ceases to have intimate relations with his mortal wife, and instead unites with the Shekhinah (Tanh. Tzav 13; *Sifre Numbers*, 99; Shab. 87a). This gives Moses the power to dictate God's actions, even annul divine decrees *(*PdRK, *Mishpatim, V'zot ha-Brachah; Mid. Teh.* 90:5; Zohar I:148a).

When Moses descended from Sinai, his face glowed with divine **glory** (Ex. 34). One particularly charming legend asserts that this was the result of using the fiery supernal ink provided by God. As he wrote, Moses would, in the custom of scribes, occasionally wipe off his pen in his **hair**. The residue produced the glow (Ex. R. 47:6).

Since the **Angels of Death** cannot claim a **soul** that is engaged in Torah study, on the day Moses was ordained to die he wrote out thirteen complete Torahs. Frustrated, the Angel had to ask God to claim Moses's soul, which God did when the last scroll was completed. Of those thirteen Torahs, Moses intended one for each tribe. The final one was taken back up to heaven with him. That most perfect thirteenth Torah is brought down from heaven and given to a worthy person for use in his lifetime, and then reclaimed by heaven.

In another version of his death, Moses defeated **Samael**/the Angel of Death by wielding his miraculous rod against the angel. Finally, God Himself had to

intervene and take Moses via the "kiss of God." Three angels—**Michael**, **Gabriel**, and Zagzagel—escorted Moses to his death by laying him upon a kingly couch (Deut. R. 11:10).

In the theosophical system of the **sefirot**, Moses represents the reconciliation of the divine antipodes of Hod ("majesty") and Netzach ("victory").

There are additionally a number of texts outside the biblical canon that are ascribed to the authorship of Moses or are purported to be an additional revelation given to Moses, such as: Jubilees, *Divrei Moshe* (DSS), Temple Scroll (DSS), *Pseudo-Moses* (DSS), *Apocryphon of Moses*, and *Gedulat Moshe*.

There arose in antiquity an interpretation of Moses as a scholar/magician in the classical mold of Pythagoras, Pancrates of Memphis, and Empedocles. The fact that Moses came from Egypt was suggestive, just as it was for **Jesus**. All the peoples of antiquity saw Egypt as the locus of occult and esoteric knowledge. Even the New Testament books of Acts refers to Moses as wholly steeped in the "words and deeds" of Egyptian **wisdom** (7:22). "Deeds" would mean magical feats to many Greek listeners. The Roman historian Pliny describes Moses as the founder of a "sect of magic" (i.e., Judaism). This idea of Moses the theurgist appears in individual **incantations** (PGM 5:109) of Late Antiquity and gets enshrined in both Hebrew (*Charba de Moshe*/"**Sword Of Moses**) and Pagan (The Eighth Book of Moses) magical manuals. A dominant motif concerning Moses in these books is his power to command angels. Moses is also credited with the knowledge of **alchemy** by both Christians and alchemists. *SEE* RIGHTEOUS, THE

Moses of Alexandria: An Egyptian alchemist of late antiquity, nothing of his work has been preserved except his excellent reputation. Later generations of alchemists sometimes conflate him with the biblical Moses. *SEE* ALCHEMY.

Moses (Shem Tov) de Leon: Spanish Kabbalist and alchemist (Spanish, ca. 13th century). He was likely the principle author of the seminal work of **Kabbalah** , the **Zohar**. De Leon wrote pseudepigraphically, attributing authorship of the Zohar collection to Simon bar Yochai, the 2nd century Talmudic Sage and mystic. He may have produced much of the work via automatic writing. He also composed several mystical tracts in his own name.

De Leon was less famous as an alchemist, but his interest in the Hermetic Arts finds expression in his mystical writings.

Moses, Eighth Book of: A magical handbook, probably the product of Greek-Egyptian Pagans and/or Christians of late antiquity. Though clearly influenced by Jewish beliefs and practices, the book has far more in common with Pagan Greco-Egyptian magical texts than with rabbinic mystical traditions, and is a singular example of religious syncretism in the Greco-Roman world. The text at times conflates the God of Israel with **Helios**, the Sun God. It also identifies "Aion" (another name for Helios?) as the high god who controls all the other divine entities. Its various adjurations invoke Zeus, **Michael**, Artemis, **Gabriel**, and Persephone.

Moses, Five Books of: (hrwt). The Pentateuch—the first five books of the **Bible** and the foundational document of Judaism. *SEE* TORAH.

Moses, Sword of: *SEE* SWORD OF MOSES.

Mother: (אמא/*Ima*). In order for an incantation for **healing** to be effective, it must include the name of the ailing person's mother (Shab. 66b). In **Kabbalah** , *Ima* is also a synonym for Binah. *SEE* MATRIARCHS; PARTZUFIM.

Mountain: (הר/*Har*). The place where **heaven** and **Earth** meet, a mountain is an archetype of the human-divine encounter. There are two cosmic mountains in Jewish tradition: **Mount Sinai** (or Horeb) and **Zion**. Respectively, these represent the revelation of pilgrimage, or spiritual quest, and the revelation of habitation, or sacred space. In both locales, God's numinous presence pierces the veil between divine and mortal realms and becomes, for a while, radically manifest. Sefer Zerubbabel identifies the five sacred mountains of Israel: Tabor, Carmel, Sinai, Zion/Moriah, and Hermon. The eschatological **temple** will span all five of these peaks.

In biblical tradition, major events of revelation, life, and **Death**, all occur upon mountains. **Abraham** and **Isaac** are tested by God (Gen. 22); **Moses**and the Children of Israel receive their theophanies on **Mount Sinai** (Ex. 3, 20). Both Moses and **Aaron** die upon mountains. In the case of Aaron, God placed one mountain on top of another as a token of the **miracles** God had performed during his lifetime (*Tanh.*, Chukat 14). God commissions the Temple to be built atop Mount Zion in **Jerusalem**. **Elijah** fights a miraculous battle with the **priest** of Baal on Mount Carmel and later experiences a major theophany while in a **cave** on Mount Horeb. Some thousands of years later, the Baal Shem Tov will fight a magical duel on a mountain (*ShB* 125).

Mythical mountains are also topographic features on the celestial planes.

Enoch on his heavenly journeys saw mountains of fire that burn day and **night**. He also saw seven mountains of supernal beauty surrounded by fragrant **trees** that will be a reward for the righteous, for they will bestow **eternal life** on Judgment Day (I *Enoch* 24–25).

There are also the Mountains of Darkness, located in **Gehenna**, to which the **fallen angel** Uzza and Azazel are chained for all eternity (*Aggadat Bereshit*).

The concept of the cosmic mountain continues to resonate well into the Middle Ages. **Sefer Raziel** describes a mountain of white fire that separates the **Garden of Eden** from the world. A hidden mountain upon which an invaluable white herb grows is a recurrent theme in **alchemy**.

Mount of Olives: *SEE* OLIVES, MOUNT OF.

Mount Sinai: *SEE* SINAI, MOUNT.

Mount Zion: *SEE* ZION, MOUNT.

Mouth: Noxious spirits, such as dybbuks and possessing **demons**, often gain entry into a person's **Body** via the mouth. **Vampire** can be rendered harmless by stuffing **Earth** in their mouths.

Moznayim: (מאזנים). "Scales/Libra." The **zodiac** sign for the month of Tishrei. This sign signifies creation, repentance, balance, and **judgment**. The world was created and the High Holy Days occur in this month.[1]

1. Erlanger, *Signs of the Times*, 121–44.

MTzPTz MTzPTz: (מצפצ). An **Atbash** code version of the **Tetragrammaton** (Zohar I:20a). It is doubled in imitation of the repetition of the Tetragrammaton that occurs in Exodus 34, when God's attributes of mercy are revealed. It is used in **incantations** to activate that attribute.

Music: Music and Judaism are inseparable. God only created the world for the sake of music (BhM 3:12–13). Music is indispensable to the worship of God (Ar. 11a). The heavens overflow with celestial music and the **Earth** sings constant hymns (BhM 3:12), but it is the songs of the Jewish people that move the **angels** to sing also (Chul. 91b). The presence of the **Holy Spirit** inspires a person to sing, and those who sing passionate hymns to God have their iniquities forgiven (Tos. Sot. 6:1; Yalkut be-Shallach 254). David was the greatest of all composers, singing songs to God even in the womb (*Ber*. 10a).

Music has been a weapon against **demons** since biblical times, when David's music drove off **Saul's** evil spirit (1 Sam. 16). Music was also one of the mechanisms used to induce **Prophecy** (1 Sam. 10; 2 Kings 3; *Likkutai Aytzot*). Elisha in particular had the "**hand** of God rest upon him" when musicians played. Some **prophets** burst into song in response to the prophetic spirit (Ex. 31:1).

Hearing music during a visitation to **heaven** is a common experience for **Hechalot** mystics. Sometimes the adept will bring melodies back to earth. The angels are also sources of musical melodies. Sometimes a Baal ha-Chalom will reveal a heavenly tune in a **dream** (*Sefer Or Zarua* 2:276; RaSHI's comment on Yev. 24b; *SCh* 324, 382). The Zohar testifies that "There are heavenly gates that can only be opened by music."

The Chasidic movement is famous for its a capella music. Their *niggunim* (wordless melodies) are a preferred meditative device for pursuing devekut, union with God.

It is David singing again in the **World to Come** that will rouse the dead from their graves, but it is **Moses** who will lead the redeemed in song for eternity (Ex. R. 23:11).

Mustafa, Benjamin: Legalist, scientist, and alchemist (Spanish, ca. 17th century). He is the author of the Latin-language (but bilingually titled) alchemical book *Mezahab Epistola*, "The Epistle 'from Gold.' "

Myrrh: (מור). An aromatic balm popular in the Middle East. **Abraham** is identified symbolically with myrrh in Song of Songs Rabbah. For this reason, it is also equated with the sefirotic quality of **Chesed** , divine **love** (*Zohar* III:3b). *SEE* PHARMACOPOEIA.

Myrtle: (הדס). A plant common to the Land of **Israel**. As part of the four species (the lulav bouquet—Lev. 23:40), the myrtle represents the phallic, masculine force at work in the universe. For this reason, myrtle branches were sometimes given to the bridegroom as he entered the nuptial chamber after a **Wedding** (Tos. Sot. 15:8; Ket. 17a). Myrtles are both the symbol and scent of **Eden** (BhM II:52; *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* 17). The **Hechalot** text Merkavah Rabbah requires one to suck on myrtle leaves as an element of a theurgic **ritual**. Kabbalists link myrtle to the sefirah of Tiferet and use sprigs in their **Sabbath** (especially Kiddush and Havdalah) rites to draw down its harmonizing power as the week is initiated (Shab. 33a; ZCh S of S 64d; *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot*, vol. 2, 73–76).

Because of the Edenic connection, they are also associated with the afterlife (Zohar II:208b–209a). At the ritual **circumcision** of a boy in the early middle ages, Jews in **Babylon** performed the circumcision over a bowl of water, sometimes mingled with myrtle and spices (*Otzer ha-Geonim*, vol. 2), then the foreskin was deposited there. Bodies were sometimes buried with myrtle branches, and to this day branches are displayed as a welcome to the ushpizin, the spirits of the **ancestor** who visit on **Sukkot** (*Hemdat Yamim* part 1, 416).

Mystery: (סוד/*Sod,* also *Raza; Nistar; Kabbalah; Midday*). *SEE* KABBALAH; PARDES; SECRET.

Mysticism: The term “mysticism” is one commonly applied, but imperfectly defined. This discussion will limit itself to “Western” religious notions of what constitutes the mystical, with, of course, special concentration on Judaism.

Scholars have struggled to give a precise definition to what constitutes mysticism within the Western religious traditions. Most regard it to be the impulse, ideology, and discipline to experience the unmediated presence of God or, more radically, union with divinity or a more broadly defined “Absolute.” Evelyn Underhill calls it, “… the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order; whatever be the theological formula under which that order is understood.” Others see mysticism as a project of human transformation, the radical revision of human nature in relationship to the divine. Another school finds the theme of “love” to be the central theme of all mysticism; often this is so intense that the **language** of mysticism is the language of eroticism.

Moshe Idel describes Jewish mysticism, in particular, in this way “the quintessence of mysticism is the sense of union with God. The intensification of religious life that characterizes most forms of mysticism culminates at times in paranormal experiences, whose literary expressions appear in descriptions of unitive relations with supermundane beings and sometimes ultimately with God.” [1]

Jews today tend to lump all such issues under the term Kabbalah, and largely use the words “mysticism” and “Kabbalah” interchangeably. This is hopelessly imprecise, as much of what constitutes Kabbalah, such as its preoccupation with theosophy and expounding on the metaphysics of the **Godhead**, does not fall within any of these parameters, and much in Judaism that does not formally belong to the kabbalistic tradition still meets these criteria. Moreover, the diverse historical, literary, and ideological movements including under the rubric of

Jewish mysticism—biblical **Prophecy**, **Hechalot** literature, Kabbalah, Lurianic cosmology, Hasidism—while having some familial resemblance, are so amorphous when seen in their totality, all of them defy the accepted definitions in one way or another.

Some modern revisionist scholars go so far as to argue that "mysticism" is an alien category of thought that has been imposed on Jewish culture and religion (are even the terms "culture" and "religion" meaningful distinctions when it comes to Jews? Discuss.) in the last two centuries by the academy and does not in any way properly reflect these traditions has they have been thought of and lived by their practitioners. Too, often, also, these traditions, most of which do fall into the very broad category of "esotericism," being self-understood as elite or occult, have been forced into a procrustean bed of being a universal, cross-cultural phenomenon, at the cost of eliding, or even effacing, their contextual cultural and historical particularism.[2]

This encyclopedia does, in fact, hold to the value of the term "mystical" in talking about Jewish civilization, despite its slippery nature, but includes as one of three rubrics, along with "Myth," and "Magic." *SEE* KABBALAH; MAGIC; MYTH.

1. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 35.

2. B. Huss, "The Mystification of the Kabbalah and the Modern Construction of Jewish Mysticism" *BGU Review* (Summer 2008).

Myth: (אגדה). What is a Jewish myth? For quite a number of people, that is a nonsensical question. Many have argued that there is no such thing as Jewish myths; being monotheistic, Judaism is a myth-less system of belief. You see this thinking, for example, in the title of Frank Moore Cross's book on ancient Israelite beliefs, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Saga.* As far as Cross (and many others) are concerned, only polytheists have myths. Cross had to hunt around for another word to describe the "master stories" of the Hebrew **Bible**, and he chose "saga." Elliot Ginsburg writes, "Judaic scholars through the 1970s tended to define myth narrowly and negatively, linking it with so-called 'pagan' religions. They therefore tended to see Judaism as a demythologizing tradition, broken only by the 'mythic resurgence' of **Kabbalah** ."

Truth is, however, that Judaism has always had its own complex, compelling mythos, starting with the Bible and extending up to today. Most Jewish myths, such as are found in the **Midrash**, are "spiritual" myths that incorporate divine things and supernatural times and events, but Jews also have secular myths; some of the best modern examples revolve around the founding of the state of Israel. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Jewish or not, what precisely is a

"myth?" Set aside for the moment the common use of myth today to mean simply "something that isn't true," and instead consider these more sophisticated definitions of "myth."

In the 19th century, John Ruskin offered one of the earliest attempts to give a positive definition of what a myth is: "A myth, in its simplest definition, is a story with a meaning attached to it other than it seems to have at first; and the fact that it has such a meaning is generally marked by some of its circumstances being extraordinary, or, in the common use of the word, unnatural." The French linguist-philosopher Ernst Cassirer sees myths as early patterns of thought. Cassirer believed that man perceives the world in symbolic forms, and that myth is one such symbolic **language** for giving order to the world.

Among Jewish scholars, a number of different definitions of myth have been proposed. Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher and Bible translator, was an early advocate for recognizing the role that myth plays in Judaism. Buber emphasizes the centrality of myth, but uses the term so broadly in his writing that he seems to be working without a fixed definition. Mostly, Buber applies the concept to primordial sagas, stories of initial encounters between man and the divine.

Ignac Goldhizer, like Cassirer, has argued that myths express patterns inherent to the working of the human mind. The historian Yosef Yerushalmi has a very broad idea of a myth—it is a narrative about the past that provides collective and sacred **memory** for a group (think, for example, of how many Americans celebrate Thanksgiving as a shared national holiday—yet how few of us actually have any familial, ethnic, or historic connection to the Pilgrims). Ithamar Gruenwald, a scholar of Israelite and early Jewish culture, links the idea of myth to **ritual**, arguing that a myth is a story connected to a ritual. He offers the story of the **Exodus** from Egyptian slavery as a signal example—Jews revisit the Exodus through various rituals on a daily (**prayer**), weekly (**Kiddush**) and annual (Passover Seder) basis. Jeffrey Rubenstein, also speaking directly to the subject of Judaism, argues a myth "tells of the paradigmatic acts of the gods (God) or the **ancestors**."

Howard Schwartz, perhaps the most prominent Jewish folklorist today, writes that "'Myths' refer to a people stories about origins, deities, ancestors, and heroes … within a culture, myth also serve as the divine charter … Myth itself is the collective projection of a people."

This encyclopedia prefers to keep the definition simple and only elaborate by example. Elliot Ginsburg usefully writes: "Most recent scholars understand

myths more broadly, as a fundamental human impulse (found in virtually all cultures) to structure life around orienting stories." The author also is in fundamental agreement with what Daniel Breslauer says when he describes them as "any narrative which conveys messages about eternal patterns of life and history."

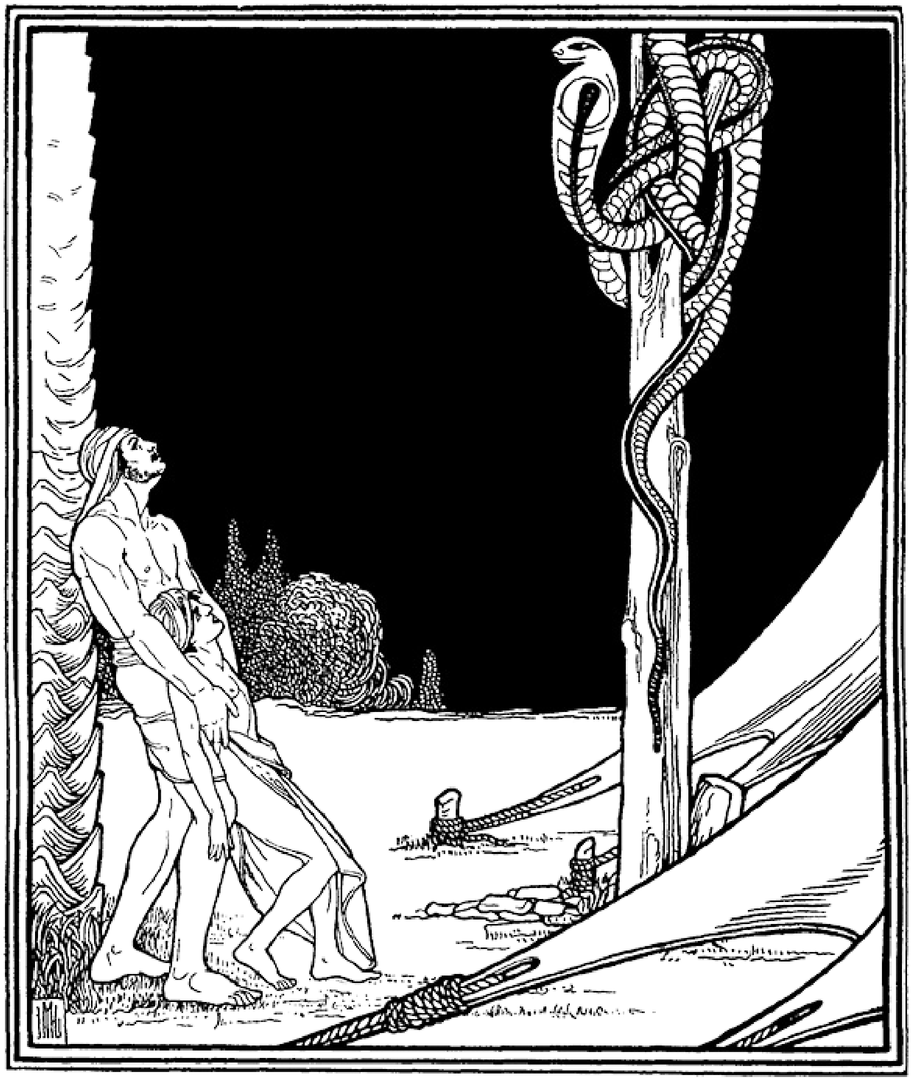
Therefore the operative definition of myth against the common usage of it mentioned above for the EJMMM is this: Myth is not "something that never happened"; a good myth is about something that happens all the time. Like Ginsburg, this encyclopedia assumes myths are fundamental to human thinking (and therefore both important and useful). They tell us great human and cosmic Truths couched in the form of stories. One of the supreme examples of this that was mentioned earlier is the story of the Exodus. On one level, the Exodus is a story about a specific event that happened to a specific people (us, the Jews) in a specific place (**Egypt**), though it happened long, long ago in a civilization far, far away (another quality of most myths). But the story is really about the eternal human experience of exile and homecoming, of being trapped and being liberated by the power of spirit. That's why people love the Exodus story so much—not just Jews, but Christians, and Muslims, people in America, Africa, and Asia, have all embraced the Exodus, often using it as a paradigm for their own struggles, personal and collective. In a different context Gershom Scholem writes that the Exodus mythically becomes "an event which takes places in ourselves" and "acquire[s] the dignity of immediate religious experience."

There are, of course, problems associated with myths. Like all impulses human, myths must be viewed carefully, even critically. Jews especially have been the victims of bizarre and hateful myths, as have minorities and aboriginal peoples all over the world. Mythic language also has to be used with care. Take for example the rhetoric of the Vietnam War. Many times we have heard it said that veterans were "spit on" upon returning from Vietnam. It has become a pervasive part of our mythic understanding of that war, the '60s, and what it means to be a civil society. Jerry Lembecke, a professor of sociology and a Vietnam combat veteran, has written a book, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* that explores the reports of protesters "spitting upon" Vietnam vets. He finds that the stories have little basis in fact. The fact is that few (if any) veterans were ever physically spit upon by their countrymen, but that many felt as if they had been. Yet because of the way this myth is told, I am sure that are people who imagine there were once ranks of hippies hanging around army depots waiting to spit on discharged soldiers. The overly-literal

application of this myth is not helpful to us today. But if we use our myths with care, applying them in order to help ourselves make sense of our world (but not to explain away or devalue others), our myths speak Truth (with a big "T") in the way few other things can: they bless us with meaning, consolation, even **healing**.

[contents]

N



Naamah: (נעמה). “Lovely/Pleasant.” One of the four Queens of the Demons. She dwells in thesea. In one strand of the tradition, she is the daughter of Tubal-Cain mentioned in Genesis 4:22, who copulated with **angels** (6:4) producing demonic children. In another, she is the wife of **Noah** (Book of Jasher 5:15). In later Jewish tradition she is the mother of Asmodeus, a **succubus**, one of the consorts of **Samael**, who seduces sleeping men. She and **Lilith** had intercourse with **Adam** in order to bear **demon** children. Once aroused by her, even if a man has **sex** with his wife instead, any children from that **conception** will be inclined toward her (Tanh. Chukkat; MhG Gen. 4:22**;** Zohar I:9b, 19b, 55a; Zohar III:76b–77a).

Naaman: Aramean general in the Bible who receives a miraculous cure of his leprosy fromElisha. The cure is affected when Naaman immerses himself in the Jordan at Elisha's direction (2 Kings 5; Git. 57b; Sanh. 107b).

Nachash: (נחש). "Serpent." *SEE* SERPENT.

Nachman of Bratzlav: Chasidic master, Kabbalist, and messianic figure (Ukrainian, ca. 19th century). Great grandson of the **Baal Shem** Tov, the charismatic and eccentric Nachman developed a devoted circle of followers. He was most famous for his intricate and enigmatic parables. He was a controversial figure in his lifetime. After his death, his followers attributed many miracles to him. To this day his followers are often referred to as the "dead Chasids," because they never found a living spiritual leader worthy to succeed Nachman.

Nachmanides: **Bible** commentator, ethicist, and mystic (Spanish, ca. 14th century). While he revealed very little of an explicit esoteric nature in most of his writings, his commentary on the **Torah** is considered a classic of Kabbalistic literature.

Nachum Ish Gam Zu: Mishnaic Sage (ca. 1st–2nd century). He was the archetypal cheerful soul in the face of adversity. He was so sensitive a soul that at one point he cursed himself with blindness for causing the death of a person (Tan. 21a). Crippled and cripplingly poor, his merit kept his decrepit house from collapsing until he was moved out of it. **Elijah** wrought **miracles** in order to save him from Roman wrath (Sanh. 108b–109a).

Nadav and Abihu: The sons of **Aaron** the High **priest** who are struck down by God when they introduce "alien fire" into the sanctuary of the **tabernacle** (Lev. 11). The **Talmud** offers a number of theories as to the exact nature of their transgression, but the topic continues to be speculated upon to this day. According to the Zohar, the **souls** of these two men were rooted in **Cain**, but they were unable to overcome damage in this root soul, so at their death they transmigrated into their nephew Pinchas, who performed a **Tikkun** for their error by defending Israel against idolatrous worship in a decisive action (Zohar II:57b; III:217a).

Naftali Bacharach: Kabbalist (German, ca. 17th century). He is the author of Emek ha-Melech ("Valley of the King"), a work notable for its demonologies, especially regarding **Lilith**.

Naftali Katz of Poznan: Kabbalist and **Baal Shem** (Polish, ca. 17th–18th century). A well-known **wunder-rabbi**, he performed numerous feats, including raising someone from the dead.

Nagaf, Sagaf, and Agaf: (נגף סגף אגף). Three destructive **angels**, usually mentioned together, found in medieval texts. Noting that each **demon's** name ends with the letter payh, it is taught that reciting prayers in the liturgy that have no final payh letters in the words can neutralize their powers.[1]

1. Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*, 155–56, 156n.

Nahar DeNur: *SEE* RIVER OF LIGHT.

Name, the Book of the: A 13th-century treatise on the **secret** power of the divine names written by **Eleazar of Worms**. Besides being one of the most comprehensive works on the magico-mystical nature of God’s name, it is also intriguing in that it reveals the actual process of esoteric transmission from master to disciple, a **ritual** that involves passing on the teaching while being immersed in **water**. *SEE* NAMES OF GOD.

Name, Hebrew: (שם). In Hebrew thought, a name is part of the defining essence of a person, and as such is a source of power and influence over that person (Ber. 7b; Yoma 83b; SCh 244). Like Native Americans, biblical parents often named their children after **omens** or circumstances surrounding their **birth** (Gen. 26, 30; 1 Sam. 1). Many Hebrew names also incorporate full or abridged **names of God**, like **Uriel** (God is my light) or Yeshayahu, (YHVH is my salvation).

God changes the names of biblical heroes to mark spiritual transformation: Abram and Sarai have the letter hay (from the **Tetragrammaton**) added to their names, making them **Abraham** and **Sarah**. **Jacob**’s name is completely changed to **Israel** (One who struggles with God), which also incorporates a divine name within it.

Every Jewish child is given a Hebrew name, usually a name separate and distinct from that which serves as his or her “legal” name. It is one’s Hebrew name that is used when one participates in **synagogue rituals** or lifecycle events.

It is considered bad luck among Ashkenazi Jews to name a child after a living relative. Often newborns are not given a name until the ritual **circumcision** or ritual naming, in order to disorient the **Angel of Death** and prevent Death from finding the infant. It is believed changing the name of an ill or dying child likewise will confuse Death (R.H. 16b; 245, 247). These name change customs are still practiced to this day in some circles.

It is bad luck for two people with the same name to live in the same town (SCh 224, 447). It is also an ill omen for a man to marry a woman with the same name as his mother (Testament of Rabbi Judah [SCh] 23). Jewish **dream** interpretation also finds ominous meaning in names. Thus if one sees a **cat** (Arabic:shunra) in a dream, it signifiesshinui ra (Hebrew: "a change for the worse"). [1]

The ability to recall one's Hebrew name is the first test the **soul** undergoes after **Death**. Therefore, some Jewish sects are emphatic about children learning and memorizing their names. Chasidic Jews learn to conclude their daily **prayers** using a biblical verse that begins with the first initial and ends with the last initial of their names, in order that the soul will be able to respond with its name when summoned to **judgment**.

Angels' names are the key to accessing their divine powers. Angel-summoning texts began appearing in Greco-Roman times that provide long lists of angelic names. According to one book, the Chronicles ofChanameel, the book's namesake actually shielded Jerusalem from the Babylonians, using his knowledge of angelic names to call down heavenly hosts in the city's defense and so thwarting the will of God. That continued until God changed the names of all the angels—sort of like changing a PIN number and password—undermining Chanameel's efforts.

The names of the **Righteous** also possess power, and they are sometimes incorporated into **amulets** and spells of protection. *SEE* ANGEL; CHIBBUT HA-KEVER; DEATH; DUMAH; HEBREW AND HEBREW ALPHABET; LANGUAGE.

1. Fishbane, "Aspects of Jewish Magic in the Ancient Rabbinic Period."

Names of God: "By the word 'YHVH,' were the heavens made" (Ps. 33:6). The ancients believed that a name conveyed something of the essence of the person who bore it. More than that, a person's name was an avenue to the power of and power over that person. The same assumptions apply to God and God's names. God's name coexisted with God prior to **Creation** (PdRE 3). This world and the next were made using the first letters of the **Tetragrammaton** (Men. 29b; Gen. R. 12:10). God's name is a stand-in for God's presence; God blessed **Abraham**, **Sarah**, and **Jacob** by adding elements of the divine name to their names (Gen. 17:5, 15, 32:29). To know the names of God is to be able to access divine power (Gen. R. 12:10; PdRE 40; SCh 471, 484).

The **study** of these divine names is a central science of Jewish **mysticism**. These names are used as maps to divine nature, as tools of **meditation**, and as sources of supernatural power that can be harnessed by the adept. Later Kabbalists went so far as to diagram divine names to better accept their power.

Over the centuries, Jews have identified many names, titles, and epithets for God. The **Bible** contains fourteen names (though Midrash ha-Gadol Genesis 46:8, claims to find seventy), most of them based on the root Hebrew word (א־ל־ה alef-lamed-hay) for deity: Elohim, אל, אלהEl, Eloha (God); אל שדיEl Shaddai (God of Mountains/Breasts); עליוןEl Elyon (Most High God); אלה ישראלEloha Yisrael (the God of Israel); אל עולםEl Olam (Eternal God); אל ראיEl Roi (God of Vision); אל בריתEl Brit (God of the Covenant); אדוניAdonai (My Lord); קנהKoneh (Creator); מלךMelech (King); אבAv (Father/Source); and of course, י־ה־ו־ה YHVH, the **Tetragrammaton**. The Sages teach that each name represents a different divine attribute: Elohim is the "name" of God's justice; Adonai signifies God's compassion, etc. Naturally, one must choose the right name for the right circumstance when one invokes God's assistance.

Rabbinic tradition adds more names for God, such asha-Makom ("The Place [of the World]/Omnipresent One"),Shekhinah ("The Indwelling"),Ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu ("TheBlessed Holy One"),Ribbono shel Olam ("Master of the Universe"), and Ha-Rachaman ("The Compassionate One"). Mystics added further to the list with terms such as Ein Sof ("Without End"), Atika de-Atika ("The Most Ancient"), and Temira de-Temira ("The Most Hidden").[1]

Aside from these names and epithets for God, Jews also found names for God by abbreviating certain power phrases. Thus words from a phrase in the **prayer** book,Atah gibor l'olam Adonai … ("You are eternally powerful, Adonai") becomes ***Agla***. The rabbinic superlativeHa-Kadosh Baruch Hu becomesHakabah. Names so constructed pop up in different contexts, but for the interests of this book, are most notably used for theurgic or magical purposes in **amulets**.

Then there are some truly esoteric names—names that are present in the Bible, but recognizable only by occult tradition. These include the following:

- The eight-letter name of God, which consists of merging the letters of the Tetragrammaton with the letters of the title "Adonai." This combination name makes a limited appearance in esoteric writings.
- The twelve-letter name of God is derived from the Priestly Blessing (Num. 7:6–9). One version is simply a combination of the three times YHVH is repeated in the blessing. A more complex version is really the twelve-word name of God. In Sefer Raziel, twelve divine names are made out of permutations of four letters of the Tetragrammaton.

• The fourteen-letter name of God, which appears on the back of a mezuzah parchment, is one revealed by temurah, or letter substitution of the phrase Adonai Eloheinu Adonai that appears as part of the Sh'ma (Deut. 6:4).

• The twenty-two-letter name of God corresponds to the twenty-two letters that make up the alphabet, though this name is not constructed from the complete alphabet. It appears in many Kabbalistic texts, in incantations and on amulets. It also appears in an acrostic prayer in some prayer books. Here the name is revealed by the technique of temurah applied to the first five Hebrew words of the Priestly Blessing, which are (translated) "Adonai bless you and guard you, [Adonai] cause illumination …" It is this source text that makes the name particularly appealing for protective spells and charms.

• The forty-two-letter name of God, which is the name Kabbalists most associate with the theurgic power of **Creation**, is derived entirely from the first chapter of Genesis. It is woven into the Jewish prayer book as an acrostic prayer, Ana B'choach. Tzeruf and **gematria** techniques applied to this name yield several angelic names and phrases of power and protection.

• The seventy-two-word name of God is also a significant tool in performing **rituals** of power. Books likeSefer ha-Malbush and an unpublished manuscript labeled Techilat ha-Yetzirah are devoted to explaining the significance and power of this particular name. Its proper use fills one with the Holy Spirit, grants power over **angels** and **demons** , and gives clairvoyant sight. The seventy-two-word name is derived from Exodus 14:19–21, which describes the angel that cursed and battled againstPharaoh's army and the parting of the sea by **Moses**. Each of these three verses consists ofseventy-two letters. Tzeruf hermeneutics yields a name of seventy-two three-letter words. Using permutations of the seventy-two-word name of God in the proper state of mind can also result in a minor revelation, called a Bat Kol (Gen. R. 44:19; S of S R. 2:2; Zohar II:132b; Zohar III:150b;Pardes Rimmonim 27:2).[2]

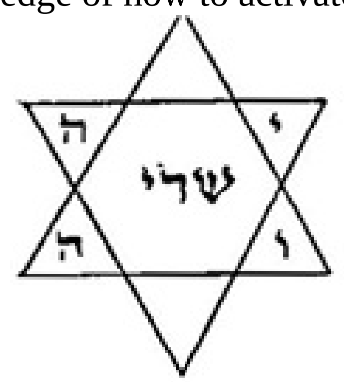
• Finally, there is an esoteric tradition that the Torah text, in its entirety, is actually one long name of God. This is one reason why aSefer Torah is sometimes employed in protective rituals, such as invoking supernatural assistance for a woman in childbirth, or exorcising a demon.[3]

According toShi'ur Qomah (**SQ)**, the **heart** of God is inscribed with seventy names.SQ provides a list of those names, which includes many familiar names and titles, but also many novel names not previously appearing in biblical or rabbinic sources.SQ also teaches that every limb of God has a divine name. One

should perhaps understand the text to be saying that every such name is a limb of God—the shape of the **Godhead** in actuality consists purely of the many divine names.

The theurgic attitude of Jewish mystics toward divine names can be misinterpreted. It seems at times they view the names of God as separate from God Himself. It is more accurate to say that Jewish mystics view the names as "access codes" that allow them to tap certain aspects of divine power (Mid. Teh. 3.2). To invoke God's name in the world means you can invoke God's presence—if you are in the appropriate moral and spiritual condition. **Moses** killed the Egyptian taskmaster with God's name (Ex. R. 1:29), **Solomon** subdued demons (Git. 68b), and Sages can make life (Sanh. 107b).

That is the "religious" view. By contrast, the purely magical view is that, like the power of the atom, God's names are imbued with power intrinsic unto themselves, and anyone, saint or sinner, righteous or wicked, can make use of the power of the names by means of **sorcery**. The only thing that really matters is simply the technical knowledge of how to activate their power.



Amulet with divine names

This, in fact, is the attitude of medieval magicians, Jewish and gentile, whose interest in divine names focused on the quest for power, ignoring the theology of divine unity that grounds all Jewish **theurgy**. As can be imagined, many Jewish authorities found such belief appalling and regarded the **magic** assumptions on which such practice are based to utterly contradict fundamental teachings of Judaism. Still, consistency is not a notable virtue of the human mind, and even some religiously educated Jews have accepted the premise that the power of God and the power of God's names are in some way separate phenomena. This is exemplified by Rabbi Eliezer's comments in Midrash Tehillim 3:2 that if people only knew the proper order in which to read the Torah, they would be able to perform countless **miracles**

Because of their potential for both power and abuse, the names of God are treated with great care in Jewish tradition, and there are many rules governing the speaking, writing, and disposal of objects containing divine names. Seven of God's names need to be treated with special care when written: El, Elohim, **Adonai**, YHVH, Ehyeh-asher-Ehyeh, Shaddai, and Tzevaot. The power inherent in the names meant that they had to be protected from falling into irresponsible hands. Thus, for example, the **Talmud** places limits on who could be taught the twelve- and forty-two-letter names of God (Kid. 71a; A.Z. 17b). *SEE* AMULET; EXPLICIT NAME OF GOD; HEBREW AND HEBREW ALPHABET; LANGUAGE; MAGIC; SEGULAH Or Segulot.

1. Dr. Samuel Cohen identifies some 120 names, titles, and figurative terms for God in his "The Name of God: a Study in Rabbinic Theology," 602.

2. Ibid., 592–98; Singer, *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 9, 160–65; also see F. Levine, "Holy Letters: The Names of God," *Practical Kabbalah & Related Folklore*, accessed 2015, http://kabbalah.fayelevine.com/letters/pk011.php.

3. Dan, *The Heart and the Fountain*, 101–5.

Names of Impurity: (שמות טומאה/**Shemot Tumah**). A mysterious power that the **Talmud** reports **Abraham** bequeathed to the gentile children of his concubines (Sanh. 91a). The concept may have its roots in Zechariah 13:2, where the "impurity of the land" derives from the names of **idols**. These children of Abraham became the fabledChildren of the East, the masters of **magic** and **astrology** . This story is offered as an explanation for why non-Jews are able to perform efficacious magic. **RaSHI** identifies shemot tumah as knowledge of **witchcraft** and demonology. Later sages relate this term to some of the techniques used in **exorcism** (Minchat Eliyahu).

NaRaNChay: (נרנחי). Acronym for the human **soul**. Lurianic **Kabbalah** modifies the traditional tri-part theory of the soul, declaring it to actually have five levels:nefesh, ruach, neshamah, chayyah, and yechidah.

Nasargiel: (נשרגאל). The angelic guardian of **Gehenna** (Gedulat Moshe;LOTJ 312).

Nathan of Gaza: **Prophet** and publicist forShabbatai Tzvi (Israel, ca. 17th century), he experienced numerous **maggid possessions** and mystical **vision**, including the one that led him first to Tzvi.

Nations: (עמות). In Jewish mythic imagination, the peoples of the world are represented by a symbolic seventy nations (Gen. 10–11). Every nation of the

world has its own **language** (Shab. 88b) and own princely **angel** to be its celestial advocate (Dan. 10:20; Jubilees 15:31–32; Tanh. Re'eh 8; PdRE 24; Zohar I:146b). These angels will, in parallel with their mortal counterparts, form alliances, conspire, and/or fight one another. Most often, rabbinic literature portrays them involved in efforts to discredit, overthrow, or thwart Israel (MdRI Shirata 2; Gen. R. 56; Ex. R. 21:5; Zohar I:86a).

In biblical thought, Israel is apportioned to God directly (Deut. 32; Isa. 44:6). In various rabbinic texts, however, angelic guardians of the Jewish people start to appear, such as **Michael**, or the eponymous angel, **Israel**.

Sevenprophets were appointed to the nations to give them the message of monotheism (Lev. R. 2:9). These nations first emerged in the aftermath of theTower of Babel debacle.

At **Sukkot**, seventy bulls were sacrificed in theTemple for the sake of each of the gentile nations (Suk. 55b; Lam. R. 1:23; PdRK 28:9).

Any gentile can become a Jew, but the **Holy Spirit** can rest upon a gentile as it can upon a Jew, depending on his (or her) deeds (TdE 48). Those gentiles who engage in the **study** of **Torah** are held to be spiritually equal to a High **priest** of Israel (B.K. 38a; Ex. R. 19:4). The pious of all nations will have a portion in the **World to Come** (T. Sanh. 12; MT, Teshuvah 3.5). The **Zohar**, on the other hand, takes a more negative view of the nations and believes that the **souls** of non-Jews derive from the left side of the sefirotic **tree** , and therefore they are under the sway of the demonic (Zohar I:131b).

Natronai, Mar Rav: Scholar and communal leader (Iraqi, ca. 9th century). According to legend, heteleported between Iraq and Spain to teach **Torah** to the Jews of Iberia (Otzer ha-Geonim).

Nature: At first appearances, the **Bible** presents a view of nature that is radically de-spiritualized compared to that of the Israelites' Pagan contemporaries.[1] There is God, who is the animating spirit of the world, but who stands "above" and "outside" **Creation**. Yet in fact, the Bible stubbornly refuses to radically divorce God from nature. Even in the famousKedushah **prayer** of the **angels** in Isaiah 6, the very moment when the Bible affirms God's radical "otherness" and transcendence from Creation, the **serafim** simultaneously declare,Melo kol ha-aretz kevodo, "His **glory** fills the whole **Earth**" (i.e., the world is an extension of God). This belief that God is simultaneously in and beyond the world is fundamental to Judaism (Jer. 23:34; Tanh. Naso 6).

Taking the biblical position one step further, Jewish mystics affirm what philosophers of religion callpanentheism, the belief that the universe iswithin God, even though the universe is not equal to God (Etz Chayyim 2). The natural world, the Kabbalists like to say, is like a wave in the ocean. It is both part of the ocean, yet distinguishable from it. Thus Moses Cordovero writes in his classic work of systematic **Kabbalah**, **Pardes** Rimmonim, "The essence of divinity is found in every single thing, nothing but It exists … It exists in each existent."

Midrashic imagination ascribes the orderly workings of nature to the power of genius or animating **angels**, which oversee the function of all *natural phenomena* (Ps. 104:4). Thus there are named angels, likeBaradiel (Hail of God) andBarakiel (Lightning of God) that control all these natural forces.

Rationalist Jewish philosophy, following the course of Western thought, especially "natural law" arguments, has argued for a radically decentralized universe. This is a direction utterly rejected, however, by Jewish **mysticism** to this day.[2]

1. E. Wiggerman, "The Mythological Foundations of Nature," in *Natural Phenomenon*, D. J. W. Meijer, ed. (Amsterdam: North Holland Press, 1992), 289–293.

2. Cohen and Mendes-Flohr, *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, 663–77.

Navel: **Mount Zion** is the "navel of the world" (theAxis Mundi) (Sanh. 37a; Tanh. Vayikra 18.23).

Nazirite: (נזיר). An ancient Israelite institution in which a layperson could deepen his dedication to God, either temporarily or permanently. Becoming a nazirite simply involved taking a vow to become one, but maintaining the status of nazirite required that one abstain fromwine, grow one's **hair** uncut, and avoid all contact with corpses.

Most people would become a nazirite for a specified limited duration of time after taking the vow. The judge **Samson** and theprophet **Samuel**, however, are examples of two individuals who were nazirites from **birth** to **Death**. Both possessed paranormal powers—extraordinary strength in the case of Samson, divinatory and clairvoyant powers in the case of Samuel. No such powers are credited to the temporary nazirite. The popular cliché ofJesus with long hair may have its origins as a Byzantine visual pun on "Nazareth/Nazirite."

Nebuchadnezzar: This king of ancient **Babylon** who destroyed **Jerusalem** (2 Kings), the Rabbis claim, was a descendant of the union between **Solomon** and theQueen of Sheba. Another tradition identifies him as the direct descendant ofNimrod. He was a mythic figure to the Rabbis, a kind of world-striding witch-

king who rode alion with asnake as a bridle (PdRE 11; Shab. 149b–150a; Meg. 11a–11b). God finally decided to humble the king and turned Nebuchadnezzar into a monstrous animal (Chronicles of Jeremeel).

Nechemiah: The Jewish governor of Persian Judah (Book of Nehemiah) is not famed for miraculous feats, but the **Talmud** claims he was conceived via a **miracle** (Sanh. 37b–38a).

Nechemiah ben Hushiel: The given name of the **Messiah** ben Joseph, the precursor to the Messiah ben David (Sefer Zerubbabel).

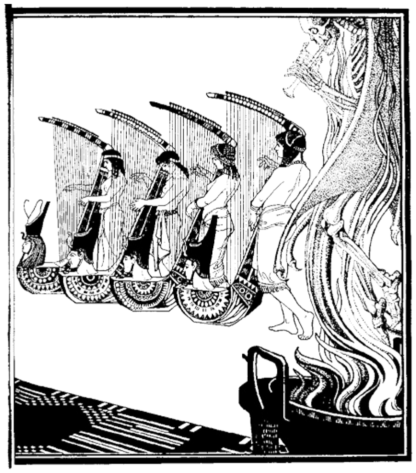
Nechiah: (נקיה). “Cleanliness of Yah.” The spirit of prosperity. The **Talmud** claims maintaining a clean home ensures the presence of this spirit (Pes. 111b). *SEE* UNCLEAN SPIRITS OR IMPURE SPIRITS.

Nechunyiah ben ha-Kanah: Mishnaic Sage (ca. 2nd century). Along withIshmael ben Elisha,Akiba, andSimon bar Yochai, Nechunyiah is one of the “big four” mystics of the Talmudic era. He appears repeatedly inHechalot texts. He is the purported author of the esoteric **prayer**Ana B’choach andSefer ha-Bahir.

Necromancer and Necromancy: (ידעני/Yeddioni, also Doresh ha-Metim; Baal Ov). The mantic practice of consulting dead spirits. It is a form of **divination** that is harshly condemned by the **Bible** (Deut. 18:10–12). That being said, it was clearly quite attractive to Israelites (Isa. 8:19–22, 19:3). The roots of this enthusiasm may go back before the rise of Israelite monotheism, to a time when the Israelites venerated their dead and consulted with ancestral spirits, or may have been introduced later through the cultural influence of Mesopotmia.[1] The story of the woman of Endor (1 Sam. 28) is the only narrative account of a necromancer in Scriptures:

> And Saul inquired of Adonai, but Adonai did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets. Then Saul said to his courtiers, “Find me a woman who consults ghosts, so that I can go to her and inquire through her.” (1 Sam. 28:6–7)

The Sages themselves believed that the dead could hear what goes on “behind the curtain” of **heaven** and therefore **ghosts** have access to paranormal information (PdRE 34).



Summoning the dead by E. M. Lilien

According to the **Talmud**, there are two methods for achieving communion with the dead: by the use of a medium, who would be possessed by a ghost, or by having a dead **soul** speak through a skull (Sanh. 65b; Ber. 59a; Shab. 152b–153a). Both of these practices are explicitly condemned by rabbinic tradition.

On the other hand, beneficent ghosts who address the living via **dreams** or other unsolicited means are to be heeded. And even though trying to induce ghostly voices or making offerings to the dead is forbidden, some Kabbalists did in fact practice **incubation**, sleeping at the graveside of a great sage or holy person in the hopes that the person's spirit would possess them. **Isaac Luria** is a signal case of someone who actively pursued communion withibburim, benevolent dead spirits, by means of a technique he calledyichudim. As is the case with so many other paranormal practices, the demarcation line between what can be considered permitted and prohibited forms of communication with the dead can become blurred. Contemporary **Chasidism** and other Jewish pietists still occasionally observe the practice of incubation. *SEE* BAAL OV; IBBUR; MEDIUM; XENOGLOSSIA AND AUTOMATIC WRITING.

1. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*.

Nefesh, Nefesh Behemit: (נפש). "Animal Soul/Life Energy." **nefesh** is the fundamental vitality animating all sentient life. This is the lowest part of the triad structure of the human **soul**, the higher souls beingruach andneshamah. After **Death**, the nefesh is the part of the soul that remains in the world, able to commune with the living (Zohar I:224b; III:70b). Kabbalists teach that the interest of **demons** in human affairs results from the demonic need to feed upon this energy.

Nehushtan: (נחושתן/**Nechushtan**). This bronze image of a **serpent** was made by **Moses** at the instruction of God in order to miraculously cure wounds from,saraf serpent bites (Num. 21:4–9). Its name,Nechushtan, is a double pun—a word play on both "serpent" (Nachash) and "bronze" (Nechoshet). It may have had wings, a common motif in the ancient Near East. It was preserved in theTemple until KingHezekiah decided to destroy it after it had become an object of idolatrous worship (2 Kings 18:4). Given its remarkable story, post-biblical sources devote very little commentary to the serpent, virtually none of what does exist pursues esoteric interpretations.Nachmanides derives a principle akin to sympathetic **magic** from the story: like cures like.

Nekudim: (נקודים). "Spots." The Lurianic book Eitz **Chayyim** interprets the "spotted" sheep in the **Jacob** saga (Gen. 31:10–12) to be a cosmic allegory that alludes to the "world of spots," a primordial period when the **sefirot** were disconnected from one another, preventing the proper flow of divine **emanations** to one another. This is equated with the condition of tohu, **chaos**, described in Genesis 1:2.

Nephilim: (נפילים). "Giants." *SEE* GIANTS

Neshamah: (נשמה). The "highest" part of the triad composition of the human **soul**, the neshamah is the divine, indestructible aspect of the spirit, the seat of intellect.

Neshiyya/Nashia: The place of forgetfulness. This strange zone of the lower worlds is the home to pygmies (Sitrei Torah,Zohar I:253b–254a).

Netzach: (נצח). "Endurance/Victory." The seventh sefirah, it is thespeculum through which **Prophecy** flows. It is personified in **Moses**. Like its counterpartHod, it is rarely the subject of kabbalistic inquiry, and the commentary on Netzach is perhaps the least developed in the esoteric tradition.

New Jerusalem: Also known as 11Q18, this document found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls** describes the eschatological battle between Israel and the **nations**, and the colossal dimensions of messianic **Jerusalem**.

New Moon: (ראש חודש/Rosh Chodesh). The new moon marks the beginning of a Hebrew month (Ex. 21:1) and, historically, it was determined by the independent report of two witnesses to rabbinic authorities (PdRE 7; Sanh. 37a). It is greeted with **prayer** and ceremony (Num. 10:10). The **Midrash** compares the Jewish people to the moon. Like the moon, the Jewish people often find themselves

outshone by more powerful **nations** and empires (which the Midrash compares to the **sun**) who have dominated the people **Israel**. Like the moon, Jews wax and wane in fortune. Yet like the moon, we always return; and visible or not, we are always strong spiritually (Gen. R. 6:2).

According to the **Talmud** (Meg. 22b), the new moon is a holiday of rest exclusively for women. The rationale for this is found in the events surrounding the **golden calf** incident:

> Aaron argued with himself, saying: If I say to Israel, Give ye to me gold and silver, they will bring it immediately; but behold I will say to them, Give ye to me the earrings of your wives and of your sons, and forthwith the matter will fail, as it is said, "And Aaron said to them, Break off the golden rings." The women heard (this), but they were unwilling to give their earrings to their husbands; but they said to them, "Ye desire to make a graven image of a molten image without any power in it to deliver." [For this] the Blessed Holy One gave the women their reward in this world and the world to come. What reward did He give them in this world? That they should observe the new moons more than the men, and what reward will He give them in the world to come? They are destined to be renewed like the new moons, as it is said: Who satisfies thy years with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle. (PdRE 45)

According to esoteric tradition, correctly performing the new moon **rituals** protects one from dying in the month that follows. In tractate Sanhedrin, the Sages offer a protective ritual to be performed at the beginning of each month:Kiddush l'vanah, the sanctification of blessing of the new moon (Sanh. 42a). The ritual can be performed from the third evening after the appearance of the new moon until the fifteenth day, but only if the moon is visible. The ritual is done outside, and one performing the rite must be presentable and in a good mood (S of S R. 20:2). Blessing the moon invites the presence of theShekhinah.

In some places, the ritual grew more elaborate over time. In medieval Europe, the ritual ofKiddush L'vanah consisted ofdancing or jumping and reciting the following **incantations** at the moon: "Just as I dance toward you but cannot touch you, so shall theYetzer ha-a not touch me." Participants also flapped the corners of their clothing in a gesture intended to shake off bad luck.[1] Then the person was to declare it asiman tov, a "good sign," three times. This writer has never observed anything like this at a contemporaryKiddush L'vanah ceremony, though others report it is still done. *SEE* ASTROLOGY; GOLDEN CALF; MOON.

1. Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 12, 291.

New Year: (ראש השנה/Rosh ha-Shanah). According to the **Talmud**, there are actually four "new years" in the Jewish **calendar**: the New Year for kings and counting the months (1 Nisan), the New Year for the world and calculating the years (1 Tishrei), the New Year for tithing cattle (1 Elul), and the New Year for tithing **trees** (Shev. 15). *SEE* ROSH HASHANAH.

Nicanor: According to the **Talmud**, Nicanor was a pious individual who commissioned ornamental doors for theTemple, which he then had specially built in **Egypt**. While on their way via boat to Israel, a storm forced the crew to throw the **metals** doors overboard. Nicanor insisted on going overboard with his gifts. Miraculously, the metal door Nicanor clung to floated and bore him to Jaffa. When the ship arrived in port, the other door miraculously floated to the surface of the harbor (Yoma 38a). Eventually they were both installed as Nicanor intended and were thereafter known as "The doors of Nicanor" (Sefer Yuhasin). *SEE* GATE; MEZUZAH.

Niddah: *SEE* MENSTRUATION.

Niddui: (נדוי). A type of temporary excommunication, it could be used to exorcise adybbuk (SA, Yoreh Deah, 334;Zafnat Pa'aneah). *SEE* EXORCISM; GET.

Niflaot Maharal: "Wonders of the Maharal." A collection of fantastic tales about RabbiJudah Loew of Prague, including his **golem** adventures. It was written by Judah Rosenberg, though it is presented as if it were written by the Maharal's son.

Night: (לילה/Lilah). The Sages compare night to life in this world and dawn to the **World to Come** (PdRE 34). It is at night, when the **Body** is at rest, that the **soul** is liberated. According to the Sages, during sleep the soul ascends to **heaven** to give an account of its deeds before it is returned to the body, purified (Odeh la El prayer).

Night is the time when the demonic is most active. The **Zohar** identifies the period of nightfall tomidnight as the time when the forces of theSitra Achra are ascendant. After midnight, the wall between the celestial and terrestrial worlds becomes permeable and the **water** of **Eden** infuse new life into the sublunary world and **evil** recedes; this is the time when it is most propitious to rise from bed and **study Torah**. *SEE* DARKNESS; DEMONS; SLEEP.

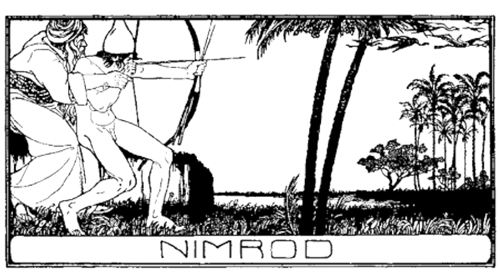
Nimrod: Described in Genesis as a "mighty hunter" (Gen. 10:8–12), the Sages describe Nimrod as the archetypal wicked king. As a young man, Nimrod made his reputation as a hunter by supernatural means: he possessed the **garments** of **Adam**, which gave him the power to subdue any animal (PdRE 24). Apparently, the garments gave him the ability to sway people also:

> Rabbi Eleazar said: "Nimrod used to entice people into idolatrous worship by means of those garments, which enabled him to conquer the world and proclaim himself its ruler, so that people offered him worship. He was called 'Nimrod,' for the reason that he rebelled [**marad**] against the most high King above, against the higher angels and against the lower angels." (Zohar I:73b)

He later claimed the throne of Cush by feat of arms. In other versions, Nimrod is the king of Shinar who initiated theTower of Babel project (Chul. 89a; Pes. 94a–b) and had himself worshipped as a god (A.Z. 53b).

When his court diviners told him of the pending birth of **Abraham**, he sought to kill the child. In the end Nimrod killed 70,000 infant boys in his quest to slay the newborn Abraham (Ma'asei Avraham Avenu). Abraham's father, Terach, hid his son with the help of the angel **Gabriel**. Nimrod continued to persecute Abraham as an adult:

> Nimrod called Abraham and commanded him to worship Fire. Abraham said to him, "So let's worship water since water has the power to extinguish fire." "Right," said Nimrod, "We should worship water." "In that case, we should worship the clouds, since they carry water." "Yes, we should worship the clouds." "Then we should worship the wind, since it drives the clouds across the sky." "Yes, we should worship the wind [the wordruach also means "spirit," a key to the next point of the argument]" "But," said Abraham, "humans have the power to rule over the spirit. Should we worship human beings?" "You're playing with words," cried Nimrod. "I worship only fire, and I am going to throw you into a huge furnace. Let the God you worship come along and save you from it!" (Mid. Bereshit 38.13) [1]



Young Nimrod

When the **patriarch** refused to renounce the one God, Nimrod had him thrown into a furnace (Gen R. 38:13, 42:5) but Abraham walked away from the inferno unharmed. Nimrod was finally slain byEsau (another mighty hunter) in a struggle to possess the awesome garments of Adam:

> Nimrod was seeking to slay him [Esau] on account of the garment which had belonged to Adam, for whenever he put it on and went out into the field, all the beasts and birds in the world would come and flock around him. (Gen. R. 65:16. Also Gen. R. 63:13; PdRE 24)

1. A. Ben Yakov, "Abraham Smashes the Idols," *AZAMRA*, accessed 2008, http://www.azamra.org/Earth/mount-03.html.

Nine Who Entered Paradise Alive: According toDerekh Eretz Zuta 1, there have been nine worthies who will attain Paradise without tasting **Death**: **Enoch**, **Elijah**, the **Messiah**,Hiram,Ebed Melech,Batya, Jaabez (son of Judah the Prince),Joshua ben Levi, andSerach bat Asher.

Nippur: Archaeological site in Iraq that yielded the greatest horde of **incantation bowls** (forty) now in the possession of modern scholars.

Nishmat Chayyim: "The **soul** of Life." Tract composed byManasseh ben Israel containing references to **reincarnation**, **demons**, spiritual **possession**, and many other occult beliefs.

Nistarot shel Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: "The Mysteries of Rabbi Simon bar Yochai." A medieval book that details the supernal **secrets** that Bar Yochai plumbed during the twelve years he hid in a **cave** with his son.

Nitzotzot: (ניצוצות). "Sparks." According to Lurianic **Kabbalah** , nitzotzot (pl.) are fragments of divine force orlight, dispersed into the created universe by thebreaking of the vessels, the cataclysmic collapse of the primeval divine order. These sparks, the creative "word" of God, are contained in everything, but are shrouded from our sight by "husks" or "shells" of profane reality. Humans must now reveal these sparks, which are concealed in every aspect of **Creation**, and restore them to God (Zohar I:4a). This **Tikkun** ("rectification" or "cosmic repair project") is achieved by the proper theurgic performance of all the commandments, both moral and ritual.[1] *SEE* KELIPOT; LURIA, ISAAC; MITZVOT; THEURGY.

1. Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 2, 65–70.

Noah: “Comforter.” When God decided to undo **Creation** and release the waters of the **abyss**, the Holy Blessed One chose Noah as the man who would build an ark and save specimens of all avian and terrestrial creatures (Gen. 6–9).

According to **I Enoch**, Noah was totally white, perhaps indicating he was an albino. He came out of the womb white as snow, eyes shining, and already circumcised (AdRN 2). A precocious newborn, he even got up and walked away from his midwife. He invented many of the essential tools of civilization (Tanh. Bereshit 5, 11). Through his three sons, Noah is considered the second father of all humanity.

He also possessed a magical book (Jubilees 10). The introduction to **Sefer ha-Razim** also claims that it was passed down through generations of biblical figures, including **Moses** and **Solomon**. It also claims that it was by the power of that book that Noah built the Ark, fed the **animals**, and survived all the hazards of the great **Flood**.

Some creatures that were meant to be exterminated by the Flood survived. The **giants**, for example, survived because one of them, Og, clung to the exterior of Noah’s Ark. The interior of the Ark was illuminated by the **tzohar**, the glowing stone filled with the light of Creation that Noah had inherited from **Adam** (Gen. R. 31).

After the Flood, Noah planted the first vine and taught himself how to makewine. Noah immediately became drunk from his innovative beverage, and his sonHam “uncovers his nakedness” while he was besotted. The **Midrash** elaborates on this cryptic expression by explaining that **Satan** seduced Noah into planting the vine and Ham either raped or castrated his father (PdRE 23). Noah then cursed Ham and his descendants for the offense (Gen. 9).

Besides **Sefer ha-Razim**, Noah is sometimes associated with another book, the Book of Noah , a manual of healings based on what the angel **Gabriel** taught him about combating demonically induced illness (**Jubilees** 10).

In both the **Zohar** (I:254b) and Lurianic thought, Noah failed to lead his generation to repentance. As a result, his **soul** was reincarnated as moss.

Noah, Book of: A number of books have been designated “Book of Noah.” Within Jewish **apocalyptic**, **Midrashic**, and magical literature, there is a continuing tradition that Noah had a book of magical **incantations**, which has sometimes been identified with **Raziel** or **Sefer ha-Razim**. Another candidate is the magico-medical bookSefer Asaf ha-Rofe.

A fragmentary text found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, 1Q19, has been offered as a candidate for an ancient "Book of Noah." It is closely related to the Enochean textual tradition.

Another DSS fragment, 4Q534, is an alternative candidate for the magicallost book, given that it appears to be a kind of **horoscopes** of Noah. *SEE* FLOOD, THE; GIANTS, BOOK OF; NOAH.

Nocturnal Emission: The Sages regarded the spontaneous emission of **semen** triggered by erotic **dreams** as a sign of demonic attack. The succubae **Lilith** andNaaman are the **demons** traditionally credited with such nighttime molestations. They seduce men in their sleep and extract their sperm in order to procreate demonic offspring (Nigei bnei Adam, "harmful sons of Adam"). In commentaries to the **Zohar**, it is even taught that **Lilith** lurks around the bed during normal intercourse between men and women and gathers any stray droplets of semen. To counter this possibility, there are a number of post-coital **incantations** that can be recited.

In a related matter, Jewish **mysticism** finds masturbation to be a grave offense for precisely the same reason: the spilling of semen outside of coitus allows demons to procreate. (Tanh. B. Bereshit 26; Gen. R. 20:11; Eruv. 18b; Zohar I:55a, 57a; Zohar II:231b; Zohar III:76b). *SEE* BANIM SHOVAVIM; NIGHT; SEX; SLEEP.

Nogah: (נוגה). "Glowing Light/Glimmer."Nogah is a Kabbalistic term referring to the divine energy that allows what we mortals term "evil" to persist in the universe. In keeping with Jewish monotheism, the **Zohar** teaches that all things emanate from God, including theSitra Achra, the demonic. **Evil** has its purpose in God's creation also. Because of this spiritual reality, even the most evil things have aklipah nogah ("a glowing husk"), a mix of evil and divine energy. **Kabbalah** teaches that the **Righteous** can learn to recognize and harmlessly release anynogah and return it to its divine source. This can usually be achieved by means of **Tikkun**, redeeming or transforming some evil thing or situation into something good (Etz Chayyim 47:5; Tanya chapters 1, 38).

North: (צפון/**Tzafon**). North is the direction signifyingGevurah, the divine **emanation** of severity (Bahir 162–163; Zohar I:14b, 77a). It is also the direction linked with impurity, from which **evil** emanates (Jer. 1:14; Ezek. 8; Mid. Konen 2:30). Later Midrashic collections suggest that God somehow left the "north side" of **Creation** incomplete, a situation that allows the demonic to enter the

world (PdRE 3). In the **Zohar**, **Lilith**, the mother of **demons** , is also called the "Northerner."

Northerner, the: Another title for **Lilith**. *SEE* NORTH

Notarikon: Greek, "Combination." This is a hermeneutic technique involving dividing words or merging adjacent words in the **Torah** to yield concealed messages. To give a famous example, by dividing the first word of Genesis, **Bereshit**, into two words,bara shit, the exegete reveals the Aramaic phrase, "He [God] created six." Six what? Six things, crucial to God's plan of **Creation**, which had to exist in the mind of God before the universe was formed. These six things are: the Torah, the **Throne of Glory**, the **Patriarchs**, the people **Israel**, the **Temple**, and the name of the **Messiah**.

Notarikons can also be acronyms that reveal **Names of God**. Thus it is taught that the final letters of the first five verses of Genesis form the divine nameTZaMaRCHaD (Shab. 105a, 12:5; MdRI Bo 8). *SEE* ENCRYPTION.; SIX PRIMORDIAL THINGS; TEMURAH; TZERUF/Tzerufim

Nukva: (נוקבא). "Feminine." This term is usually used in reference to the feminine aspects of thePartzufim.

Numbers: The practice of **gematria**, or the spiritual interpretation of numbers, is an important hermeneutic technique for understanding sacred Scripture and tapping theurgic powers. Important symbolic and/or sacred numbers:

1—One indicates unity, divinity, and wholeness, as exemplified by God.

3—Three signifies completeness and stability, as represented by the three **Patriarchs** and the three pilgrimage festivals—**Passover**, Shavuot, and **Sukkot** (1 Kings 17:21; Dan. 6:10).

3+1—This is a number cluster that signals the fulfillment of God's plans (Am. 1; Dan. 7:25).

4—Four is a recurrent number in both exoteric and esoteric Jewish traditions. The Passover Seder is particularly structured around fours: the Four Questions, the Four Sons, and four cups ofwine. There are four cardinaldirections and there are fourMatriarchs. Four is also a common factor in esoteric interpretations: four angels surround the **Throne of Glory**, there arefour kingdoms of the eschaton, and the famous **four Sages** who enter Paradise.

5—There arefive books of Moses, and five divisions to the **psalms**. Magical/mystical texts are also sometimes separated into divisions of five. Five is the number of protection, as symbolized in the **chamsa**, the talismanic **hand**.

7—Seven is one of the greatest power numbers in Judaism, representing **Creation**, good fortune, and blessing. The **Hebrew** word for “luck,” gad, equals seven in gematria. The other Hebrew word for luck, **mazal**, equals seventy-seven. The **Bible** is replete with things grouped in sevens. Besides the Creation and the exalted status of the **Sabbath**, the seventh day, there are seven laws of **Noah** and seven Patriarchs and Matriarchs. Several Jewish holidays are seven days long, and priestly ordination takes seven days. The Land of **Israel** was allowed to lie fallow one year in seven. The menorah in the **Temple** has seven branches. The prophet Zechariah describes a strange celestial stone with seven eyes (chapter 4). This emphasis on seven continues post-biblically with seven **Wedding** blessings, seven circuits performed about a groom, and seven days of mourning after the **Death** of a close relative. Events, prayers, and esoteric observances that involve multiples of seven are also common. Entities both natural (gold) and supernatural (**angels**) are often grouped by sevens (I Enoch 20; II Enoch 19).

Seven is a factor in many occult elements and events. The first verse of the Torah consists of seven words and seven is the recurrent number in Pharaoh’s divinatory **dreams** in Genesis. The walls of Jericho fall after the Israelites encircle it seven times. In the **Zohar** , the seven lower **sefirot** are those aspects of God that are present inAsiyah, our world of action. Seven is also the preferred number in spells, **magic squares**, **amulets**, and the like (Gen. 7:2; 1 Kings 18:43; Deut. 16:9; Pes. 54a; Sot. 10b).

8—Eight is the number of completion. The **tabernacle** was dedicated in an eight-day ceremony. Male children are circumcised on the eighth day (Gen. 17). Chanukah is an eight-day holiday.

10—Ten is a symbol of good luck and power: there areTen Commandments, God requires ten righteous individuals in Sodom to avert divine punishment, and ten men constitute aminyan (“a spiritual community”) (Gen 18, 24:10; Ex. 26:1; Dan. 7:7–24).

12—Twelve represents totality, wholeness, and the completion of God’s purpose. There are twelve tribes of Israel (ten of which must be restored),

twelve months in the year and twelve houses of the **zodiac** (Gen. 27:20, 25:16; Ex. 24:4, 25:27; Ezek. 43:16; Yoma 75b, 77b; Tan. 25a; Chul. 95).

18—Eighteen is the value of the Hebrew letters Chet andYud, which together spell the wordchai, life. For this reason, eighteen is considered the luckiest number. God is mentioned eighteen times in both Psalm 29 and the Song of the Sea (Ex. 15:1–21), giving these verses special protective power.

24—The number twenty-four symbolizes abundance. At its prime, **Jerusalem** once had twenty-four dream interpreters you could consult, twenty-four main thoroughfares with twenty-four side-streets leading to twenty-four alleys each containing twenty-four houses (Lam. R. 1).

32—According to Sefer **Yetzirah**, thirty-two is the number of the "Wonderful ways of wisdom," the number of organizing principles that underlie the universe. These are the twenty-two letters of the **Hebrew alphabet** plus the decimal numbers that form the basis for the sefirotic tree.

40—Forty appears many times in the **Bible**, usually designating a time of radical transition or transformation. Among the most famous examples are these: It rained for forty days and fortynights during **the Flood** (Gen. 7). Exodus records that **Moses** spent forty days on **Mount Sinai** with God. Forty is the number of years the Israelites were required to wander in the wilderness until they were allowed to enter Canaan. Corporeal punishment in the Torah involved forty lashes. **Elijah** fasted for forty days prior to receiving his revelation on Mount Horeb. Multiples of forty are also common: forty thousand men rallied to Barak in the book of Judges. The **Talmud** also reports wondrous phenomena occurring in units of forty. It also appears in mystical texts, usually as an element of **purification**. Thus theBook of the Great Name advises its readers to abstain from sleeping in one's own bed for forty days and nights after using the book, mimicking the time Moses spent away from camp while he received the Ten Commandments (Gen. 7; Ex. 24; 1 Sam. 17:16; 1 Kings 19:8; Git. 39b, 40a; Sot. 34a).

70—This number symbolizes the world. There are seventy **nations** in the world, seventy languages, and seventy princely angels. The Greek translation of the Bible, the first to make it available to the gentile, was done by seventy Jewish scholars, who, though working separately, produced seventy identical translations.

Finally, it is important to note that odd numbers are lucky; even numbers (especiallypairs) are bad luck.

Numbers Rabbah: A **Midrash** on the biblical book of Numbers, it preserves several esoteric traditions.

Nun: (נוּן). Fourteenth letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**, it has the vocalic value of "n" and the numeric value of fifty. It is one of the five letters that have a sofit, or end-form when it appears as the last letter of a word. Then it takes the shape of a long tail. Nun signifies faithfulness, light, submission and rest (the regular bent shape), and uprightness and action (ˆ, the long sofit form). Mysteriously, the traditional text of the **Torah** includes two inverted nuns (Num. 10:35–36) that appear in a passage describing the transport of the Ark of the Covenant. Several esoteric explanations have been offered for this curiosity.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabe*t, 151–58.

Nuriel: (נוריאל). "Fire of God." Angel of beauty and passion (Cairo Geniza T-S K 1.73; Zohar II:42).

Nut: (אגוז/**Egoz**). A nut is an important esoteric symbol in Judaism, representing concealed **secrets**. The "garden of nuts" mentioned in **Song of Songs** (6:11) becomes the focus of considerable mystical speculation. Some understand it as a symbol of the secret **Torah** concealed beneath the plain sense of the words. Others see it as illustrating the spiritual reality of the divine sparks trapped in husks ofevil that characterize the lower worlds (Zohar I:44b; Zohar II:15b;Etz Chayyim). **Eleazar of Worms** understood it as a symbol of the divine **chariot**.[1]

It is customary to abstain from eating nuts in the weeks leading up to the High Holidays, supposedly because the **gematria** value of egoz is the same as chet, the word for sin (Mappah, Orech Chayyim 583:2), which only works with the Aramaic-flavored spelling of chet, חטא.

1. Wolfson, *Along the Path*, 2.

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O



Obed-Edom: The man who sheltered the **Ark of the Covenant** for several months for King **David** after the Ark slew one of David's servants (1 Sam. 6). The **Bible** reports Obed-Edom was greatly blessed by the presence of the Ark on his property. According to the Sages, his daughters-in-law bore him grandchildren on a monthly basis during that time (Num. R. 4:21; Ber. 63b).

Obizoth: A demoness that strangles children (Testament of **Solomon**).

Occult: *SEE* SECRET.

Odeh la'El: (אודה לאל). "I thank God." This 16th-century mystical liturgical poem (piyut) is a **love** song to the **soul**. The poem assumes that **sleep** is the physical

manifestation of a metaphysical drama, in which the soul makes its nightly journey into the heavens, where it offers an account of itself to God:

Pay attention to the soul: [it is] Opal, amethyst, and gold,
A light as bright as is the sun, Far brighter than the morning!
I thank the God who searches the heart When morning stars rejoice in unison.
She is hewn from the Throne of Glory, to sojourn in this barren earth
To deliver us from the flame [of Gehenna] And illumine [for us] before morning.

The human soul, drawn from the Treasury of Souls, is a thing of divinity, and therefore the instrument of human salvation. When the worshiper awakens in the morning, having survived trials nocturnal and spiritual, he praises God. **light** as a symbol of divinity freeing one from the terrors of the dark is a commonplace in mystical rhetoric. The soul being “brighter than the morning” echoes descriptions of **Adam Kadmon** :

Pray, awake! For every night Your soul ascends to on high
And there accounts for her actions [that day] To the Creator of night and of morning.
If He finds her adorned in **prayer** shawl and tefillin,
Like a bride adorned for her wedding always, each and every morning.
He will return her to him [the body], You will [continue to] be her faithful guardian.

The divine soul, which is feminine, re-couples each **night** with the Creator, the masculine aspect of divinity. In the erotic theology of this poem, the good deeds and ritual acts of the person while waking enhance her beauty in God’s eyes, ensuring the soul’s welcome reception on high. Thus pleased, God reunites the soul with the **Body** coming day:

No one need die in his sin, [as] it was evening, and it will be morning.
Don’t let her become impoverished, [your] highest soul, so innocent and chaste.
He who cannot keep her safe, how can he merit the light of morning?
May we merit this year to see Adonai in delight
And say [at God’s coming], our griefs replaced by cheer,
“you shall hear My [God’s] voice in the morning.”

Echoing the language of Genesis in the creation of the days, the person who strives to do right and good by the soul, God’s beloved, is born anew each day.

So too, on a comic level the worshipper asks to see another kind of dawn, the advent of the messianic era.



"Ascent of the Soul" with permission from Abigail Bagraim

Odd Numbers: *SEE* NUMBERS.

Ofan, Ofanim: (אפן). "Wheeled [One]." A class of **chariot**/throne **angels** mentioned in Ezekiel 1, and perhaps Daniel 7:9, where they are called Galgalim. It is the revolving Ofanim that create thunder and lightning (Chag. 12b–14b; PdRE 4). They are of the second rank of angels (M.T., Yesodei ha-Torah 2.7). According to Midrash Konen, the Ofan Sandalfon, whose dimensions reach from **Earth** to the very **Throne of Glory**, is the angelic link between God and Israel (2:25). The circularity of the Ofan symbolizes the reciprocating bond and flow of spiritual energy between the upper and lower worlds.

Og of Bashan: (עוג). The biblical king of Bashan was a **giant** who tried to prevent the Israelites from crossing his territory (Deut. 3). One of the antediluvian giants, he survived **the Flood** by clinging to the outside of **Noah** 's Ark (Pseudo-Jonathan, Gen. 14:13; Zev. 113b; PdRE 23). He was so huge that one of his teeth was the size of a throne (Masekhet Sofrim). Because he plotted against **Abraham**, God cursed him to be slain by one of Abraham's descendants (Gen. R. 41–42, 53). In Masekhet Sofrim, he is actually identified as Eliezer, Abraham's servant (Hosafah 1:2; Yalkut 765).

During the time of the **Exodus**, he cast the **evil eye** on the Children of Israel, to no effect (Deut. R. 1:22). Eventually, he went out to battle **Israel** directly,

attempting to hurl a rock at them as big as their entire encampment (Ber. 54b). God caused a miraculous team of ants to eat a hole through the middle of the rock, which then fell like a yoke around his neck. God then grew **Moses** to the height of ten cubits, tall enough to smite the giant in the ankle and kill him (Pseudo-Jonathan Num. 21:35; B.B. 54a–b).

Ohel: (אוהל). "Tent." Pre-Israelite Canaanites believed that the gods assembled in the sacred tent of El, the supreme god. Thus the idea that the God of Israel would command **Moses** to build a tent-sanctuary, the **tabernacle**, also called the ohel moed, "tent of meeting," must not have seemed too odd to the Children of Israel. Psalm 15 describes God's celestial tent sitting atop a sacred **mountain**.

In a more modern practice, pious Jews will construct a canopy, or even a building, over the grave of a beloved **rebbe**, sometimes with a ner tamid, or perpetual light, turning it into a sanctuary. This, too, is called an ohel, and pilgrims will gather there to pray for the **intercession** of the **Righteous** dead person and to leave a petitionary note, called a pitka or kvittel.

In the **World to Come**, the righteous enjoy the comfort of dwelling in seven canopies (B.B. 75a; SGE). *SEE* ADAT EL; ANCESTORS; TENT OF MEETING.

Oil: (שמן/**Shemen**). Oil is a source of power, both combustible and spiritual. It is a symbol of divine **emanation** (Zohar I:88a). As the fuel used to light the **menorah** and religious **lamps**, oil is a symbol of the divine spirit. In ancient Israel, oil—mostly **olive** oil—was a multipurpose product, used for many mundane, religious, and **magic** purposes. Oil was used in the sacrificial cult. It was poured on Nazirites and those afflicted with leprosy that were ready to reenter the Israelite community. It was also used to anoint sacred shrines (Gen. 29) and those elevated to high office, principally the king and High **priest** (1 Sam. 16; Lev. 8). The most famous **miracle** associated with oil is the miracle of Chanukah, when a one-day supply of oil burned for the full eight-day rededication ceremony for the **Temple**, though there is also a legend of oil miraculously flowing down from **heaven** for **Jacob** (PdRE 35).

Oil is used in hydromancy (or lecanomancy); there is a guardian spirit in oil that may be consulted for purposes of **divination**. One spills some oil, most likely in a bowl or cup of **water**, and studies the resulting pattern. The Sages do not consider this a reliable form of augury (Sanh. 101a). Nevertheless, **Chayyim Vital** repeatedly consulted **witches** skilled in this form of divination (Sefer ha-Hezyonot 120, 125). In magical handbooks like **Sefer ha-Razim**, it is used as an ingredient in magical potions. *SEE* FOOD.; MESSIAH.

Oil, Festival of the New: A holiday, unknown to the normative Jewish **calendar**, mentioned in the **Temple** Scroll:

> [You shall] count from that day seven weeks, seven times (seven days), forty-nine days; there shall be seven full Sabbaths; until the morrow of the seventh Sabbath you shall count fifty days. You shall then offer new oil …" (Temple Scroll-11QT; 11Q19, 20; 4Q365a)

It may have its basis in the biblical list of priestly privileges, however (Num. 18:12–13; Neh. 10:34–40). It is not known whether the holiday was actually ever observed outside the circle of the **Dead Sea Scrolls** community. *SEE* OIL.

Olam: (עולם). "World." Derived from the verb alam ("to conceal"). *SEE* WORLD.

Olam ha-Ba: (עולם הבא). *SEE* WORLD TO COME.

Olam ha-Tohu: (עולם תהו). "The World of Chaos." A term that appears frequently in Chasidic thought, but in such different contexts, it is difficult to fix its precise meaning. In some places, it seems to be a temporal dimension, the universe prior to the creation of the primordial vessels of light, perhaps related to the Lurianic concept of the "World of Nekudim." In the writings of Nachman of Bratzlav (Likkutai Moharan), it is the nether region between this **World** and the **World to Come**, where ghostly **souls** wander, seeking a resting place. In CHaBaD metaphysics, on the other hand, it is the higher realm from which human-sustaining life "food" (i.e., plants, animal meat) emanates (Likkutai Torah). *SEE* BREAKING OF THE VESSELS DYBBUK; FOOD; FOUR WORLDS OF EMANATION; GHOST.

Olive: (זית/**Ziyit**). The olive **tree** is a symbol of peace and, because olive trees can live upward of a thousand years, longevity. Zechariah learns that the olive tree symbolizes the never-ending bounty of divine beneficence (Chapter 4). Olive oil is used to anoint kings and **priests** (Ps. 133:2) and will be used to anoint the **Messiah** at the End of Days. The Rabbis believed that eating olives enhances one's ability to memorize **Torah**.

Zohar associates oil with Chochmah, and treats references to oil as allegories for the emanation of the "**lamps**" of the **sefirot** (I:240a; II:87b; III:34a).

Most overtly magical practices involve the leaves of the olive tree. Chai ben Sherira Gaon describes the belief that throwing olive leaves inscribed with divine names at bandits will paralyze them. One Hechalot formula requires the adept to eat olive leaves in preparation for summoning the Sar ha-Torah. *SEE* FOOD; HERBS AND VEGETABLES; OIL.

Olives, Mount of: (הר הזיתים/Har Zaitim). A **mountain** ridge directly east of **Jerusalem**, across the Kidron Valley. It was over the Mount of Olives that the Shekhinah began its journey into exile after the destruction of the **Temple**, and it is over that same mountain ridge that the Presence of God will return at the End of Days. At the advent of the **Messiah**, **Elijah** (or **Gabriel**) will sound the shofar from its summit, at which moment the mountain will split asunder and give up the dead buried in it (Ezek. 11:23; Zech. 14; Lam. R. petichta 25; AdRN 34).

Omen: (סמן/Siman, also Ot). Stories involving signs and portents of things to come are recorded in the **Bible**, **Talmud**, and throughout subsequent Jewish tradition. Jews find serendipitous omens in names, accidents, overheard words, unusual births, the behavior of children and **animals**, **weather** , heavenly prodigies, and dreams (Sefer ha-Hezyonot and Shivhei ha-BeSHT provide numerous illustrations of how attentive Jews are to omens). Omens can be good or bad, and there are many methods for ameliorating bad omens. *SEE* DIVINATION; DREAM.

Omer: The forty-nine-day period between the holidays of **Passover** and **Shavuot** is a period of spiritual vulnerability. It marks the period of the Israelites' ascent from the impurity of **Egypt** to the **purity** and power of the revelation of Sinai. Therefore, Jews observe the "counting of the omer," making the countdown to Shavuot, the holy day which celebrates the giving of the **Torah**, a time of spiritual preparation and precaution. Because of the dangers associated with this period, traditional Jews eschew **Weddings**, playing **music**, holding parties, or other joyous occasions. Some pietists will use a chart decorated with protective verses, like **psalm** 67, which has seven verses of seven words each, to keep track of the count. The mystic and purported author of the **Zohar**, Simon bar Yochai, died a miraculous death on Lag B'Omer (the thirty-third day of the Omer) (Idra Zuta).

Oneiromancy: The art of divining through dreams. **Joseph** and **Daniel** were famed for their talent at this form of augury. Tractate *Berachot* 55a–57a devotes considerable discussion to it. Women were considered both receptive to ominous dreams and skilled oneiromancers (*Sefer ha-Hezyonot* I:17, 18; III:7, 8, 12). *SEE* DIVINATION; DREAM.

Oniel: "God Is My Power." A punishing **angel** of **Gehenna** (Mid. Konen).

Onoskelis: A **succubus** mentioned in the Testament of **Solomon**.

Ophites: Alternately known as the Naasenites, they were a Gnostic movement linked to Judaism in late antiquity. *SEE* GNOSTICS AND GNOSTICISM, ANCIENT.

Or, Orot: (אור). The **Hebrew** word for "light" has an almost infinite number of esoteric connotations. The most complex taxonomy of light may well be the teachings of **Isaac Luria**. His system, for example, differentiates three types of primeval light.

> *Or Achudim* ("Unified Light")—this is the highest emanation of light flowing from head of **Adam Kadmon** . From this light, the highest stages of the **sefirot** formed.
>
> *Or* **nekudim** ("Speckled Light")—this streams from the navel of the Primordial Man and forms the intermediate structures of the sefirot.
>
> *Or Berudim* ("Dappled/Showering Light")—this flows from the **phallus** of **Adam Kadmon** and gives form and life to the lower worlds.[1]

SEE LIGHT

1. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 133.

Oral Torah or Law: The term תורה שבעל פי /Torah she-b'al Pei ("Oral Law") is used to refer to either (1) the rabbinic hermeneutics of how to interpret the Written **Torah**, or (2) to the whole body of rabbinic traditions and lore. According to rabbinic tradition, **Moses** received both the written and the oral Torah at **Mount Sinai**(*Avot* 1; *PdRE* 46). It is the oral Torah that is the source of the bulk of Jewish fantastic and esoteric teachings.

Orchard of Holy Apples: *SEE* APPLE ORCHARD, THE HOLY.

Ordeal: God puts certain biblical figures to the test by asking them to do something difficult, as in the case of **Abraham** having to **sacrifice** his son (Gen. 22). **Joshua** employs some sort of trial by lot (or Urim and Thummim) to determine who violated God's proscription against pillage being taken from Jericho (Josh. 6–7). Ordeals were also used in the face off of **Moses** vs. Korach (Num. 16), or the dueling staves between Aaronites vs. the other tribes (Num. 17:16–26). Still, none of these are actually formal judicial proceedings. These were one-time crisis tests.

So despite these examples, the human use of trial by ordeal or divine test is not a regular part of Jewish jurisprudence, excepting one special situation: the Sotah. In this trial for a wife suspected of infidelity, she is required to drink a potion

made up of **Earth** taken from the **Temple** grounds combined with a written **curse**—possibly written in the earth itself—that has been dissolved in living **water** . If she is in fact guilty of adultery, she will die and so "return to the dust." If innocent, the power of the potion will make her pregnant and the resulting child will be "like Abraham." This link to Abraham is apparently because of his righteousness, and because he once trod on the ground of the Temple site, infusing that earth with his holiness (Num. 5; M. Sot. 2:2; Sot. 17a).



Priest administering potion by E. M. Lilien

The ordeal of the Sotah subsequently becomes the model for many magical potions and formulae, which often require the adept to write a divine name or incantation on an edible object or dissolve the words in water and drink them.

Origen: This Church Father noted that Jews are especially adept at the use of **magic**, and gave particular credence to the idea that certain **Hebrew** terms, particularly the names of the **Patriarchs** and **angels**, have magical power (Contra Celsum).

Original Sin: The doctrine that the disobedience of **Adam** and **Eve** and their expulsion from **Eden** tainted all future generations of humans, making every person innately depraved and unable to effect, by their own action, behavior acceptable to God. For **Christianity**, of course, the Fall of Man or the Fall from Grace, is a massively important doctrine.

Judaism, by contrast, does not have a doctrine of original sin. Jewish tradition does not tease out additional punishments to the ones listed in Genesis 3. Moreover, Jewish tradition has never required the kind of metaphysical heavy lifting from the Eden story that Christianity has. The weight of the Hebrew **Bible** directs the attention of Jewish exegetes away from the Eden narrative. While it's position in the first four chapters gives it great prominence, it is striking that Adam, Eve, Eden, and the expulsion have virtually no mention, much less role, in subsequent biblical texts. The figures "Adam" and "Eve," HaAdam and Chavah, are not mentioned again throughout the rest of the Hebrew Bible. The figures of the first couple never appear in the rhetoric of the prophets, the poetry of the **psalms**, or the narrative accounts of Israel. Only Eden gets passing mention, mostly in **Ezekiel**, as the location of the ideal mythic past. Rather, the function of the Eden story seems to serve as a foreshadowing of the pivotal story of the TaNaKH, the Egyptian **exile**; its harsh work and difficult labors (in both sense of the word) in **Egypt**. Mythologically, Eden is a sign, emblematic of both regret and hope. Jews take from Eden not the notion of human "sinfulness," but that all human life and human history is a series of exiles and homecomings.

Orlah: *SEE* AREL.

Ormuzd: (ערמוזד). A **demon**, the child of **Lilith**. (B.B. 73b).

Ornasis: A vampiric **demon** mentioned in the **Testament of Solomon**.

Ornias: An **incubus** mentioned in the **Testament of Solomon**.

Orpah: The Moabite sister-in-law of Ruth (Ruth 1). In the **Midrash**, she is the promiscuous (*Ruth R.* 2:20) mother of the giants **Goliath** and Ishbi-benob (*Ruth Zuta* 1). She actively fought on behalf of her son against **David** in a rousing battle (Sanh. 95a). It is unclear whether she herself was a giantess (Midrash Ruth 2.9). *SEE* GIANTS.

Oshaya, Rabbi: Talmudic Rabbi and theurgist (ca. 3rd century). He used his knowledge of **Sefer Yetzirah** to make a **golem** calf to eat on the **Sabbath** (Sanh. 67b).

Osiris-Michael: An angelic name found in the magical text, the Prayer of **Jacob**. The linking of the Pagan god Osiris with the high angel **Michael** is indicative of a kind of "inclusive monotheism" circulating in the Greco-Roman world. The

gods of polytheistic pantheons are thus acknowledged as real but “demoted” to angelic status, making them subordinate to the one God of Israel.

Ot, Sefer ha-: “Book of the Letter.” Abraham Abulafia’s prophetic-apocalyptic revelation that provides much of the biographical information available on his life. It is one of the few mystical tracts that survived to this day that describes his mystical-prophetic experiences. *SEE* ABRAHAM.

Otiyyot ben Sirach: *SEE* ALEF-BET OF BEN SIRA.

Otiyyot de Rabbi Akiva: *SEE* ALEF-BET OF RABBI AKIVA.

Otiyyot ha-Mashiach: (אתיות המשיח). “Signs of the Messiah.” Portentous events that herald the coming of the **Messiah**. While several Jews filled with messianic fervor have, over the centuries, written about the conditions that will signal the end of times, Jewish tradition in general evinces an ambivalent attitude toward all attempts to anticipate the advent of the eschatological Messiah, especially given that all predictions of the past 2000 years have proven wrong. The **Dead Sea Scrolls** contain a document known as “Signs of the Messiah” (4Q521). The rationalist **Maimonides** articulates the most widely accepted summary of the circumstances that will surround the Messiah:

> In future time, the King Mashiach will arise and renew the Davidic dynasty, restoring it to its initial sovereignty. He will rebuild the Mikdash [The Temple] and gather in the dispersed remnant of Israel. Then, in his days, all the statutes will be reinstituted as in earlier times. We will offer sacrifices and observe the Sabbatical and Jubilee years according to all their particulars outlined in the Torah … One should not entertain the notion that the King Messiah must do miracles and wonders, bring about new things within the world [that had never existed before], resurrect the dead, or perform other like feats. This is not true … If a king will arise from the House of David who delves deeply into the study of the Torah and, like his ancestor David, observes its commandments as dictated by the Written Law and the Oral Law; if he will convince all of Israel to go [with Torah] and repair the breaches; and if he will fight the wars of God, we may, with assurance, consider him Messiah … If he succeeds in the above, builds the Mikdash on its site, and gathers in the dispersed remnant of Israel, he is definitely the Mashiach …
>
> He will then perfect the entire world, to serve God together, as it is written [Zeph. 3:9], “I will make the peoples pure of speech so that they will all call

upon the Name of God and serve Him with one purpose.” (*M.T.*, Hilchot Melachim 11)

Many messianic contenders and movements since his day have attempted to hitch themselves to the Maimonidean wagon, but to no avail.

Ov: (אב). A familiar, most likely a spirit of the dead (Lev. 20:27; Deut. 18:11) or a **necromancer** (Baal ov). *SEE* BAAL OV; YEDDIONI.

Ozhiya: (עזהיה).**Angel**-summoning texts identify Ozhiya as Sar ha-Panim (“the Prince of the Countenance”) indicating this may be an alternative name for **Metatron**.

[contents]

P

Padiel: (פדיאל). "Redeemer of God." Sar of the fourth celestial precinct, he guards the Gate of Mercy by which the **prayers** of the repentant reach God (Zohar II:249a).

Padkaras: (פדקרס). An angel of the Divine Countenance (Sar ha-Panim) mentioned in Ma'aseh Merkavah. It is unclear whether this is just an alternate name for **Metatron** or an angel in its own right.

Pairs: (זוגות/Zugot). The doubling of a variety of things is a source of bad luck. According to the **Talmud** (Pes. 109b–110b) activities done twice in a row or in pairs, such as **eating**, drinking, or copulation, invites the attention of evil spirits once the person leaves his or her home. Thus, one should neither celebrate a double joy (like two **Weddings**), nor perform the same onerous task twice (such as a judge passing the same sentence) all on the same day. Even drinking from two cups, one after the other, invites bad luck or the **evil eye**. (Pes. 109b; En Yaakov ad loc.). On a different but related note, the Book of the Name warns the adept not to look in the face of a twin for forty days after reading the book.

Asmodeus is the **demon** that has power over this vulnerability. The Talmud passage explains how to militate against demonic attack by using the rule of pairs:

> If a person forgot [not to go out when demons are most prevalent] and went out, what should he do? He should clasp his right thumb in the fingers of his left hand, and vice versa, and say, "I and my fingers are three." If he hears a voice say, "You and I are four," he should respond, "You and I are five," and so on, until the demon gets angry and leaves. (Pes. 110a)

Palace: (היכל/Heichal). In the **Bible**, the term is used interchangeably for both a **Temple** and a palace, probably because in the Iron Age both buildings were part of a larger "government compound." Starting in **apocalyptic** writings and early Jewish **mysticism**, heichal becomes a standard term for a plane, level, or principality of **heaven**; often **Eden** is specifically mentioned as residing in a celestial Hechalot (PdRE 12). There are seven Hechalot (pl.) that constitute the divine residence, a kind of vast celestial complex, a supernal analogy to the agora or forum of Greek and Roman cities.

Modern writers will sometimes refer to the Hechalot literature traditions as "Palace Mysticism," though probably in the minds of these ancient mystics they

are really more focused on the archetype of the Temple when they were describing each heavenly heichal, with **guardian angels** patterned on the guardian **Cherubim** that stood in the Jerusalem Temple:

> Said Rabbi Ishmael: Thus did Rabbi Nechunyiah say to me: Totrosi'ai the Lord God of Israel of Hosts sits within seven palaces, one within another. And at the entrance of each palace are eight doorkeepers … [1]

In later medieval thought, the palatial theme becomes more evident, with the Hechalot of heaven being described in terms of walled gardens, splendid chambers of repose, and other images more associated with noble residences, as **Maimonides** does in his parable about the question for divine knowledge:

> I say then: The ruler is in his palace, and all his subjects are partly within the city and partly outside the city. Of those who are within the city, some have turned their backs upon the ruler's habitation, their faces being turned another way. Others seek to reach the ruler's habitation, turn toward it, and desire to enter it and to stand before him, but up to now they have not yet seen the wall of the habitation. Some of those who seek to reach it have come up to the habitation and walked around it searching for its gate. Some of them have entered the gate and walked about in the antechambers. Some of them have entered the inner court of the habitation and have come to be with the king, in one and the same place with him, namely, in the ruler's habitation. But their having come into the inner part of the habitation does not mean that they see the ruler or speak to him. For after their coming into the inner part of the habitation, it is indispensable that they should make another effort; then they will be in the presence of the ruler, see him from afar or from nearby, or hear the ruler's speech or speak to him.[2]

Portraying God as a king dwelling in a palace is a common parabolic image in **Midrash** and Chasidic stories (Gen. R. 15:22; Tales of Rabbi Nachman). The Zohar reports there to be seven celestial palaces and seven corresponding palaces of impurity (I:194a; II:262b–269a). There are a number of esoterically important "palaces," both literal and metaphoric, in Jewish literature. *SEE* PALACE OF THE BIRD'S NEST; PALACE OF THE NUT; PALACE OF SPLENDOR; SEVEN HEAVENS.; THRONE OF GLORY.

1. G. Scholem and M. Smith, "Hekhalot Rabbati: Greater Treatise Concerning the Palaces of Heaven," accessed 2015, http://www.digital-brilliance.com/kab/karr/HekRab/HekRab.pdf, 36.

2. S. Pines, *Guide for the Perplexed*, vol. 3 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 51.

Palace of Love: This celestial precinct is Tiferet. The **souls** of the pure are received there (Zohar I:44b; Zohar II:97a, 146b).

Palace of Splendor or Glimmering Palace: (היכל נוגה/Heichal Nogah)**.** One of the many **palace** of the **Messiah**, it is built from supernal letters and is found in the precincts of the **Garden of Eden**. There the Messiah and the **Righteous** dead gather on the **Sabbath** (Zohar I:7b; BhM, vol. 3, 135–36).

Palace of the Bird's Nest: (היכל קן הטור/Heichal Kan ha-Tor or Kan Tzipor). The hidden dwelling place of the **Messiah** once he leaves the **Garden of Eden**. From there, he is able to view the suffering of Israel in preparation for his coming (Zohar II:7b–9a; Zohar III:196b; SGE; ShB 42). The Bird's Nest is the celestial launch pad for the Messiah's entry into the world:

> On that day, the King Messiah will arouse, emerging from the Garden of Eden, form the place called the Bird's Nest, and he will arouse the land of Galilee. On the day when he emerges, the whole world will tremble … (Zohar II:27b)

SEE DOVE, GOLDEN; PALACE; SEVEN HEAVENS.

Palace of the Nut: (היכל האגוז/Heichal ha-Egoz)**.** One of the **palaces** within **Eden**, this one is derived from a verse in **Song of Songs**, "let us go down into the **nut** garden" (S of S 6:11; Ginnat Egoz). It is regarded to be the place of the yeshiva shel malah, the academy on high, where the **Righteous** dead gather to **study Torah**. In some sources, it is synonymous with the messianic **Palace of Splendor** (SGE).

Panentheism: *SEE* NATURE; EMANATION.

Papyri, Magical: Greco-Roman documents of late antiquity containing magical formulae, **rituals**, and designs for **amulets**. Almost universally written in Greek, they often combine Jewish, Christian, and Pagan divine names in the incantations. The magical papyri have many parallels to **Hebrew** magical texts from the same period, texts like **Sefer ha-Razim**, **Sword Of Moses**, and the magical recipe books of the Cairo Geniza, and both Greek and Hebrew texts clearly arise out of the same milieu, though the degree of resemblance varies according to how much the Jewish authors take seriously the rules and admonitions of the Sages. Thus the gentile papyri put a premium on adjuring a wide range of Pagan deities (along with the God of Israel), using magical props

and materials, and on spells for cursing or binding one's enemies. Depending on the scruples of the author, Hebrew magical books will incorporate these same features to some degree, but may at times substitute the names of **angels** for deities, or avoid non-kosher ingredients, or emphasize the role of the magical word by reducing or avoiding entirely the use of magical objects and devices.[1]

SEE INCANTATIONS, SPELLS, AND ADJURATIONS; MAGIC; NAME OF GOD; PERMUTATIONS; SORCERY; SYMPATHY; WITCH AND WITCHCRAFT.

1. H. D. Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Also see B. Kern-Ulmer, "The Depiction of Magic in Rabbinic Texts: The Rabbinic and Greek Concept of Magic," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 27, no. 3 (1996).

Paradox: Jews find great value in considering the truths encompassed by paradoxes, or seemingly contradictory ideas.[1] Paradox creates a polarity between two teachings, resulting in an instructive tension.

This sense of paradox is rooted in the Hebrew **Bible** itself. The rabbis of antiquity taught that the reason God appeared to **Moses** in a burning bush was to teach him no place is devoid of divinity. Yet Moses still experiences the presence of God "outside" himself and it is described as a personal encounter with a personal God, with dialogue, disagreement, and command.

Paradoxes such as this help illustrate the limits of human language in describing the ineffable truths of existence. Of course, on high all paradoxes are reconciled (Tikkun; Yichud), though in ways beyond human comprehension.

The role of paradox in the religious life gets its most sophisticated treatment in Chasidic mystical theology.[2]

For example, the Hasidic theology of Berdichev and CHaBaD regard God as simultaneously "No-thing" and "The All." We are part of the All, and therefore nothing in ourselves:

> Where I wander—You./Where I ponder—You./Only You, You again, always You./You! You! You!/ When I'm gladdened—You./When I am saddened—You./Only You, You again, always You./You! You! You!/Sky is You. Earth is You./You above. You below./In every trend, at every end/Only You, You again, always You./You! You! You! [3]

Yitzchak Levi's song is a paean to the unity of all things in God, yet it is premised on a dualistic point of view; there is myself (Yitzchak) and there is You (God). Jewish **mysticism** holds all live in this paradox. Nachman of Bratzlav once declared, in a playful twist on Jewish pessimism:

Gevalt! Zeit eich nit meyaesh/ Woe is me! There is no despair in this world. (Likkutei Mohanan II:78)

In addressing God as a subject (or Buber's I and Thou—Buber opens his magnum opus by saying that the world is "two-fold"), the Berdichev Rebbe acknowledges that the creatures of the material world cannot escape experiencing the world as multiplicity.

1. Verman, *The Books of Contemplation*, 59–60, 158–159.
2. Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 2, 164–73.
3. M. Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters* (New York, Shocken Books, 1947), 212.

Paralyzation: Certain Jewish saints were credited with the power to paralyze evildoers. The great Babylonian scholar Chai ben Sherira Gaon discusses a belief among Jews that **olive** tree leaves inscribed with divine names could immobilize bandits. Jonathan Eybeschitz also claimed the power to paralyze those who threatened him (Otzer ha-Geonim; Beit Yonatan ha-Sofer).

Pardes or PaRDeS: (פרדס/**Persian**). "Paradise." This term has multiple meanings. Exoterically, it refers to a garden (S o S 4:13). In time it becomes a locution for either the **Garden of Eden** or of the heavenly afterlife, because the term is forever associated with the cryptic Talmudic story of the four Sages who entered Pardes (Chag. 14b). From this passage it also serves as a metonym for the phenomenon of the mystical experience.

PaRDeSalso functions as a hermeneutic typology, being read as an acronym for four methods of Scriptural interpretation: ***P*ashat** (authoritative or plain-meaning), ***R*emez** (allegorical or philosophic), ***D*rash** (homiletical or Midrashic), and **Sod** (esoteric or mystical). The meanings of these four terms is not are not universally agreed upon; different interpreters of the fourfold hermeneutic will assign each term slightly different meaning (i.e., remez can mean "allegorical" to some, "parabolic" to another, or "legal reasoning" to yet another). Pardes also carries the connotation of sacred **study** in toto. *SEE* BIBLE; FOUR SAGES; MIDRASH; NUT; ORAL TORAH OR LAW; SECRET; TALMUD; TORAH.

Pardes Rimmonim: "Garden of Pomegranates." The mystical magnum opus of Safed Kabbalist Moses Cordovero. It is perhaps the most comprehensive and systematic presentation of classical **Kabbalah** ever written. It also contains many teachings about mystical theosophy, angel- and demonology, and **theurgy**.

Pargod: "Curtain." The supernal **curtain** that separates God from the rest of **heaven** . Those who can overhear the voices behind it, such as the dead or the

ascendant mystic, can learn the future (*Chag*. 16a; *Yoma* 77a; *Ber*. 18b; *PdRE* 4, 6). *SEE* SEVEN HEAVENS.; THRONE OF GLORY.

Partzufim: (פרצופים). "Countenances." First outlined in the **Zohar**, this metaphysical concept is more fully developed by **Isaac Luria**. According to the Lurianic cosmogony, after the catastrophe of the breaking of the vessels, the shattering of the primeval structure of light, the Ein Sof reconstitutes the fragments of the cosmic order into five "countenances" or "visages" that are able to mediate between supernal and material realities in a way the primordial vessels were not. Think of the Partzufim as analogous to a "patch" for a faulty computer program.[1]

The Partzufim interact with humanity in the work of **Tikkun**. These countenances also constitute and encompass the personal dimensions of God that are described in biblical and rabbinic writings. This aspect of Lurianic thought has a complex relationship with the sefirotic structure of classic **Kabbalah** , not unlike the "wave/particle" phenomenon in quantum physics. Thus whether the divine structure manifests itself as the **sefirot** or as the Partzufim depends on certain conditions, but they are essentially two aspects of the same divine force. The five countenances are:

Arikh Anpin: The "long/great countenance," also called the Atik Yamim ("Ancient of Days").

Abba: "Father," the male aspect of the divine gamos is linked to the sefirot of keter and/or Chochmah.

Ima: "Mother," the celestial mother is tied to Binah.

Zer (or Zaur) Anpin/Ben: "The short/lesser countenance." Product of the union of Abba and Ima, it is tied to the lower six sefirot: Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, and Yesod.

Kallah/Malchah/Bat: "Bride/Queen." The feminine counterpart to Zer Anpin, she is linked to Malchut.

The Partzufim, like their sefirotic counterparts, are also integral to the notion of the restoration of the **Adam Kadmon** , the cosmic human. In a kind of inverted "imitato dei," all human actions that advance the cause of cosmic restoration are mimicked by the Partzufim.[2] Thus humans help to activate them and ensure the **healing** flow of divine energies between higher and lower worlds.

1. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 140–44.

2. M. Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies: Book of Visions and Book of Secrets* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 28–29. Also see Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 2, 65–70.

Passover: (פסח/Pesach, also Chag ha-Aviv; Chag ha-Matzot). The holiday of Passover, which is celebrated every spring, is based on the miraculous events of the **Exodus**.

The word for the holiday, Pesach, normally translated as "passover," more properly simply means "protection," in the sense of apotropaic/spiritual protection (the Assyrian cognate verb means to "placate [a spirit]"). The **blood** of the first paschal animal (a lamb or **goat**) offering served as talismanic ritual against **Death** entering the home of the Israelites.



The destroyer outside an Israelite home on Passover night

In both pietist and kabbalistic traditions of Judaism, all of the elements of the Passover are thought to have spiritual-theurgic power. The burning of all leaven on the eve of Passover, for example, is meant to symbolize the destruction of the **Yetzer Ha-Ra.** in one's self, a task which, like removing all leaven, can never be perfectly achieved (J. Ber. 4:2, 7d).

Central to the holiday is unleavened bread: (matzah). A large, cracker-like wafer that is eaten throughout the holiday of Passover in place of risen bread. It is eaten to commemorate both the slavery and liberation our **ancestors** experienced. It is therefore a symbol of paradox: it simultaneously symbolizes slavery and freedom. Matzah is made using only specially supervised (keeping it free from exposure to airborne yeast) wheat and water (the essential nutrients for life). It is then baked no more than eighteen minutes (the number symbolizing life).

It is a symbol of ritual and spiritual **purity**; Jews eat matzah free of leaven just as we must free ourselves of the "leaven" of ego, **sin**, and old habits. At the Seder, three pieces of matzah are prominently displayed, reminding Jews of both the three Biblical classes of Jews (**priest**, Levite, and Israelite) and of the three mythic epochs (the **Garden of Eden**, historic time, and the time of the **Messiah**).

One aspect of unleavened bread that has particular occult symbolism is the Afikoman. The Afikoman is one-half of a matzah wafer that is publicly broken, only to be hidden away during the Seder. Children must then find it or steal it from the holder in order for the Seder to continue. Originally intended as a pedagogical tool to keep the attention of children during the ceremony, by the Middle Ages the Afikoman became an object of life-giving power and started to be used as an **amulets** against the **evil eye**. Customs include preserving a piece at home for good luck, while some may actually carry crumbs of the Afikoman in their coat pockets. Pregnant women can keep a piece of Afikoman nearby to ensure an easy labor. According to one tradition, an Afikoman kept seven years can avert a flood or other natural disaster.[1]

In expounding on the proper observance of Pesach (M. Pesach 8), Rabbani Gamliel requires at a minimum that participants explain the symbolism of two more objects at the Seder aside from the matzah: the Pesach ("shankbone") and Maror ("bitter herb"). Both these objects have well-defined exoteric meanings alluding to the Exodus from **Egypt**. But there are more objects and gestures in the ritual that get little or no explicit explanation. These are the "objects that don't know how to explain themselves."

The first is the charoset, a fruit and **nut** compote. The conventional explanation offered is that it represents the mortar with which the ancestors set the bricks during their slavery. Yet this interpretation is a contrived ex post facto interpretation. Why would the mortar binding Jews to misery be sweet? The real purpose is esoteric, that the ingredients are drawn directly from **foods** mentioned in **Song of Songs**—fruits, wine, nuts, and spices. Since the early mystics understand the Song of Songs to be God's inner thoughts at the time of Exodus, this garden of metaphors signifies the divine passion (i.e., "Your kisses are sweeter than wine" S of S 1:2) for the people **Israel**. The charoset then is not a reminder of a concrete task, but a mimetic reminder of God's **love** for Israel at the time of Pesach and a reminder to God to extend that love to their descendants.

Then there is the second lettuce (hazeret). It is puzzling as to why there needs to be a second herb on the Seder plate besides the horseradish or Romaine lettuce, which serves as the "bitter herb" of biblical precedent. While a Mishnah on the Seder mentions hazeret as well as maror, regard the terms as synonymous. Seder presentation before the 16th century only had five objects, while virtually all rituals today have six to accommodate this second herb. The hazeret has its roots in Lurianic **mysticism**, which insists on this added component in order to better represent the Partzufim, the mystical divine structure. By having the lettuce as well as the horseradish, there are then ten components (three Matzot, zaroa, carpas, maror, beitzah, charoset, hazeret and the Seder plate that holds them) to the Seder that parallel the ten sefirotic elements (Keter, Chochmah, Binah, Gevurah, Chesed, Tiferet, Hod, Netzach, Yesod, Malchut).

Finally, there is a roasted egg. This is to remind the participants of the Chagigah (festival) **sacrifice** made in the Temple at Pesach. The egg is chosen so as not confuse that offering with the Pesach lamb once eaten as part of the Seder —in ancient times lambs were offered both at home and in the Temple.

Finally, **Elijah**, known as the "Angel/messenger of the Covenant" (Mal. 3:1), is invited to partake in the meal. Elijah is understood to be the herald of the Messiah, as well as the figure who will restore the power of **Prophecy** to the people Israel. Therefore his presence is invoked at every Passover Seder and a cup of wine is set out for him in welcome and in the hope that he will resolve all controversies in Jewish tradition (Haggadah).

Much of the Seder ritual is constructed around groupings of fours: four questions, four sons, and four cups of wine. In practice, there are a number of theurgic and magical customs that have become associated with the holiday and the apparatus of its observance. The most famous of these is the medieval incantation known as the sixteen-sided sword of the Almighty, which, interestingly enough, is also a multiple of four.[2] *SEE* PRAYER; UNLEAVENED BREAD; WINE.

1. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 134, 295.

2. Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*, 137–38.

Patriarchs and Matriarchs: (אבות ואמהות/Avot and Imahot). Declared by the Sages to be the "**Pillars** of the World," Jewish mystics also assign great metaphysical significance to the first ancestors of the Jews, primarily **Abraham**, **Sarah**, **Isaac**, **Rebecca**, **Jacob**, Leah, **Rachel**, and **Joseph**, but sometimes others, also.

God created the world only for the sake of Abraham coming into existence. The Patriarchs are the "**chariots**" of God in the world; in effect they were a kind

of "incarnation" of God's presence. The **Zohar** calls Abraham the "four legs" of the **Throne of Glory** (Gen. R. 47:6; Zohar I:5, 78a).

Because of their merit, God continues to forgive the sins of the people **Israel**, their children. Often the dead ancestors are portrayed as intervening in **heaven** on behalf of their living descendants (PdRE 44). The Matriarchs can be appealed to in **prayer** and supplication to intercede before the Throne of Glory on behalf of both individuals and the whole people. The names of the Matriarchs are considered particularly powerful, and are invoked in **healing** prayers and protective **amulets**.[1]

In the Zohar, Abraham and Isaac represent antipodal divine forces, **Chesed**, Love, and Gevurah, Fear; these forces are reconciled in balance through Jacob. Out of that balancing of cosmic energy, the people Israel sprang into being (Zohar, I:169a; Zohar II:54a–b). *SEE* ANCESTORS; IRON; RIGHTEOUS, THE.

1. Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*, 137–38, 143; Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 2, 910 figure 8b.

Payh: (ף, פ). Seventeenth letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**. It has a dual vocalic value, being a "p" if a diacritical mark is placed in its middle, or an "f" if one is not. Payh also has a sofit form (ף), in which the curved bottom of the letter is straightened into a vertical line. Payh has the numeric value of eighty. The word payh itself means "mouth," which the shape of the letter resembles. The letter therefore symbolizes speech and, because we are the "speaking animal," humanity.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 180–89.

Pelotit: The daughter of Lot. In both the **Bible** and rabbinic literature, Lot is portrayed as an unsavory character, so it is not clear why he deserves to be rescued from doomed Sodom; perhaps the merit of **Abraham** protected him. His daughter, on the other hand, was a noble figure. Despite the laws of Sodom that prohibited hospitality to the needy, she secretly fed the hungry by various clever subterfuges. When she was finally caught, she was burned alive by the inhabitants of Sodom. It was her cry for justice (Gen. 18:21) that brought God's wrath down upon the cities (PdRE 25; Sanh. 108b; Gen. R. 49:6; Sefer ha-Yashar, Vayera).

Pentagram: The five-pointed star so familiar to Western occult practitioners is first linked to **Solomon** in the Greek-language document, The Testament of Solomon, where it is revealed to have the power to subdue **demons**. Non-Jewish sources sometimes refer to it as the "Seal of Solomon," while later Jewish

sources use the same title for the hexagram. Pentagrams reappear from time to time in Hebrew magical and alchemical texts, and on **amulets**, but very little written lore about their significance in Jewish occultism exists. The hexagram takes on much greater significance for Jews. *SEE* MAGEN DAVID.

Perek Shirah: A poem, purportedly by **Solomon**, recounting the praises that animals, plants, and all creation, from the heavens to **dogs**, utter for their Creator, all constructed from biblical and Talmudic verses. All who recite it daily will be delivered from the fires of **Gehenna**.

Permutations: Jewish magical and mystical texts frequently feature long strings of permutated letters. Most often these permutations are derived from the letters that make up a **name of God**. Reciting these repetitions aloud as part of a spell presumably had some kind of mantra-like hypnotic effect.

The use of permutations of names, particularly the **Tetragrammaton**, was probably a merging of the Jewish ideology of the powerful divine name with a Greek belief in the divine meaning of vowels. As the Greek philosopher Nicomachus wrote:

> And the tones [vowel sounds] of the seven spheres, each of which by nature produces a particular sound [seven vowel sounds in Greek, corresponding the seven heavens] are the source of the nomenclature of the vowels. These are described as unpronounceable in themselves and in all their combinations by wise men … However, when they are combined with the materiality of the consonants … they have potencies which are efficacious and perfective of divine things. Thus theurgists … make invocation symbolically with hissing, clucking, and discordant sounds.[1]

The Church Father Eusebius also recorded a teaching that the Tetragrammaton was actually the seven vowels reduced to four (Preparation for the Gospels 11.6). Once there was circulating this ideology that the four-letter name was really compounded of all vowels (yud is a diphthong—“y”, “i”, “ee”; vav can serve double duty as an holam—“oh”, “oo”; and hay, which can also do double duty in **Hebrew** as a marker for “ah”), then all these ideas (the power of the Name, the divinity of vowel sounds, the Name as divine expression of the cosmic vowels) came together so that the theurgic and ritual power possibilities of the Tetragrammaton began to be fully exploited. In Hebrew **rituals** of power, combining the divine letters with cycles of vowel sounds harmonizes the material and celestial spheres and activates divine forces to respond to the

earthly adept. This was perceived as a dangerous venture, but one that promised access to power and **wisdom**.

An example of this would be an incantation of angel **summoning** found in the **Sword Of Moses.** that has a string of permutation based mostly on the four letters of the **Tetragrammaton**, yud, hay, vav, and hay. Transliterated, the passage looks like this: *HU HI HHI HU HH AH UH IH IH HUI HU HI HU NA HUH IHU IA HU HU IH IHU HI HU IA IH UH HU IA HU HUA HU IH UH HU HUH IHI HU IH AHIH MH UH*. The logic by which these permutations are ordered, and the rationale for introducing other letters into the mantra, is now lost to us. Permutations also appear in Jewish **meditation** practices and, in less esoteric form, in Jewish liturgy in hymns like "Ein Keloheinu." [2]

1. Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, 6–7.
2. Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, 76–92.

Perush Sodot ha-Tefillah: "Commentary on Secrets of the **prayer** [Service]." A collection of esoteric teachings concerning the statutory prayers and **rituals** of Jewish worship written by **Eleazar of Worms**.

Pesach: "Passover." The spring festival that celebrates the **Exodus** from **Egypt**. *SEE* PASSOVER.

Pesak ha-Yira'ah v'ha-Emunah: "Opinion on the Awe and the Faith." This treatise, purportedly written by Joseph ben Uziel but actually a work of the Circle of the Special Cherub, is devoted to the mystical significance of **prayer** and to experiencing a vision of God akin to those described in the **Bible**.[1] *SEE* CHERUB, THE UNIQUE.

1. Dan, *The 'Unique Cherub' Circle*, 101–24.

Pesher: A style of **Bible** interpretation found in the **Dead Sea Scrolls** that treats biblical prophecies of the past as referring to events contemporary to the interpreter. Pesher interpretations have all but vanished from Jewish hermeneutics in the past two thousand years, but a form of pesher is alive and well in some circles of **Christianity**, where books such as Hal Lindsey's The Late Great Planet Earth still treat ancient apocalypses as blow-by-blow accounts of current world events.

Pesikta de-Rav Kahana: An early medieval **Midrash** devoted to the **Sabbath** cycles that especially focuses on stories of the destruction and future redemption of **Jerusalem**. It preserves some Jewish fantastic beliefs.

Pesikta Rabbati: Medieval **Midrash** on the holidays that records some Jewish fantastic traditions.

Pesikta Zutarti: Medieval **Midrash** on the **Torah** that is a source of Jewish fantastic traditions.

Petachiah of Regnesburg: Medieval adventurer (German, ca. 12th century). In his travels around the Jewish world, he recorded many wonders: miraculous tombs of Jewish heroes, wells that refused to provide water on the **Sabbath**, and fabulous traces of biblical events throughout the Holy Land.[1]

1. A. Unterman, *Dictionary of Jewish Lore & Legend* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 154–55.

Petayah, Judah: Rabbi and exorcist (Iraqi, ca. 19th–20th century). He is the author of Minchat Yehudah, a book that includes his interviews with spirits—conversations that provided detailed accounts of the spirit world and how it interfaces with the human world.[1]

1. Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judaism*, 177.

Petichat ha-Lev: (פתיחת הלב). "Opening the Heart." A type of paranormal **ritual** meant to speed the memorization and mastery of **Torah** teachings. The ritual involves writing a magical **incantation** on either a cake or a hard-boiled egg, the first ever laid by a hen, and then **eating** the enchanted object. This conjures the angelic Sar ha-Torah and/or the Sar ha-Panim, who comes to the aid of the spellcaster. *SEE* ANGEL; METATRON; SUMMONING.

Phallus: The phallus as a symbol of the source of life and of salvation has a long established history in Jewish interpretation (Gen. 17; Ex. R. 1:20; Zohar I:6a, 197b). One sage calls it the "peacemaker of the home" (Shab. 152a).

More controversial than the role of the human penis in Jewish thought is the idea of God having a kind of spiritual analog to a phallus. A few modern scholars have attempted to argue that there was a "cult of the Divine Phallus" present in biblical religion. This argument has usually hinged on the special place of **circumcision** as a "mark of the covenant." Such theories have proved largely unpersuasive. Quite a number of Pagan cults existed in the ancient world that explicitly celebrated the cosmic phallus, such as the cults of Osiris and of Thor, but did not require their male devotees to modify their own penises. On the flip side, Israel is not the only culture that has the custom of **circumcision**, and there seems to be no obvious correlation across cultures between ritual circumcision and penis adoration. Arguments that there are veiled references to

God's phallus in the **Bible** are even more tendentious. Rabbinic texts are likewise almost entirely bereft of such sacra-erotic speculations. One **Hechalot** text, however, Hechalot Rabbati, features a brief description of a sexually charged dance performed by the **angels** before the **Throne of Glory**.

Zoharic Kabbalah, however, is centered on a blatantly erotic interpretation of the **Godhead**, dividing the functions of the **sefirot** into male and female sides. The **Zohar** includes multiple interpretations built around a concept of God's "genitals. "Using a phrase in Isaiah, "behold the King in his beauty" (33:17) as its springboard, the Zohar interprets the word for yofi, "beauty," as a euphemism for a divine member. Tikkunei Zohar explicitly claims the "**divine image**" that God bestowed upon man (but not upon woman) is the penis (I:62b, 94b). The Zohar also interprets a passage from Job, "In my flesh I see God, "as a reference to the human penis being in "the image of God." Depending on the interpretation one reads (the Zohar is often difficult to track on this topic), this supernal phallus is manifest in one or the other of two sefirot, Tiferet (Beauty) and Yesod (Foundation) (Zohar I: discussion throughout Lech Lecha and Vayera).

To add to the confusion, apparently unlike the human member, the supernal "phallus" is actually an androgynous entity (Bahir 61). Specifically, the corona of the divine member represents the Shekhinah/Yesod, the feminine aspect of divinity, while masculine Tiferet is identified with the circumcised penis [shaft?]. Once Yesod unites with Tiferet, the feminine "waters" (read: "vaginal fluid") of Malchut/Shekhinah flow "upward." This in turn triggers the flow of masculine "waters" (read: "**semen**") into her, thereby receiving its seed. Through these commingled divine male and female principles comes the outpouring of the supernal waters that enliven and fructify the lower worlds, sustaining Creation.[1]

This vivid mystical ideology of a sexually charged deity has been a scandal to more philosophically—and rationally—minded Jews and a public embarrassment even to mystically inclined yet prudish Jews who have come after the Zohar**.** As a result, to this day it is very difficult to get a clear statement about this aspect of Zoharic metaphysics from even the most committed Kabbalists. *SEE* GODHEAD; ZER ANPIN..

1. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 326–80; Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 225–28; Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 106–15.

Pharaoh: According to rabbinic legend, the Pharaoh of the **Exodus** did not die with his troops. Instead, he left **Egypt** and became the king of Nineveh. There he finally submitted to God's will when the prophet Jonah appeared (PdRE 43).

Pharmacopoeia: Jews of the ancient and medieval world used a wide variety of materials for homeopathic, medical, and magical purposes. Mandrake, for example, has been an ingredient in **love** potions since biblical times (Gen. 30). But it is Rabbinic literature that preserves many herbal and dietary remedies. Medicinal uses for herbs found in the **Talmud** include:

Asparagus: beer or broth made from it is beneficial to both heart and eyes.

Bitter vetch: good for the bowels.

Black cumin: eases chest pain.

Dates: for hemorrhoids and constipation.

Radishes and lettuce: aid digestion.

Small cucumbers: laxative.

Garlic: improves **virility**, increases circulation, and kills intestinal parasites.

Milt: for teeth.

Lentils: prevent croup.

Mustard and asparagus: general preventatives.

Beets and onions: good for general healing. (Ber. 40b, 44b, 51a; AZ 11a; B.K. 82a)

In addition to these, some herbs were thought to have influence over supernatural forces. Fennel, for example, was prized for driving away **evil** spirits.

Hebrew magical formulae also make extensive use of herbs and compounds, mostly organic, but also **metals**. A comprehensive list is beyond the scope of this work, but here is a partial list of compounds and objects taken from **Sefer ha-Razim**:

ashes	frankincense	ox brain
bay leaves	glass	precious stones
blood	gold	roots
bronze	herbs	silver
cake	honey	spices
chicken	ink	spikenard
cloth	iron	sulfur
coal	lead	sweat

copper	lizards	tin
dog meat	musk	water
fat	myrrh	wax
flour	myrtle	wine
flower	oil	

When a Hebrew magical text does include rituals involving materials and/or objects, they are usually deployed in one of two ways: either as **sacrifice**s—burning incense, or throwing a gold plaque into the sea, for example—or as material analogies for the reality being influenced, such as breaking a bowl to break the power of a **demon** or using human sweat to make **love** potions.[1]

Chasidic rebbes have their own updated arsenal of products: unleavened bread; foods, etrogs, and oil previously used in religious rituals; or potions made from ingredients like those listed above.[2] *SEE* FOOD; HEALING; MAGIC; POISON; SEGULAH Or Segulot.

1. Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, 70–78.
2. Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors*, 136, 147–48.

Philosopher's Stone: An object, sometimes described (when it is described at all) as a rock or mineral, that can serve as a catalyst for the transformation of **metals** and other, even greater, feats. At times the stone is interpreted as an allegory for something more abstract, such as the mind, or a specific theosophical insight.

This key device in the work of **alchemy** is closely associated with a number of Jewish figures, starting with biblical characters. Alchemists theorized that the long life spans credited to the **Patriarchs** were a result of their mastery of alchemical sciences, and specifically, their possessing a philosopher's stone. It is this stone that **Jacob** slept upon when he had his angelic **dream**. Some have speculated that the Urim and Thummim is connected to it. Both **David** and **Solomon** have been credited with possessing one.[1]

1. Schwarz, *Kabbalah and Alchemy*, 13, 23, 50–51. Also see Patai, *The Jewish Alchemists*.

Phineas: *SEE* PINCHAS.

Phoenix: (חול/Chol, also Milham). This fiery mythological **bird** stirs with the **sun** each day and lives for a thousand years, after which it is consumed by **fire**, only to rise from its own **ashes** and live again (**Midrash Samuel**). The biblical basis for this bird in Jewish mythology is Job 29:18. The phoenix achieved this unique status as an immortal bird because it refrained from bothering the overburdened

Noah during **the Flood** voyage (Sanh. 108b; Gen. R. 19:5).

Physiognomy: The study of a person's physical features (face, **hands**, **hair**, gait) as a means to understand their **soul** or character (Ben Sira 19:29–30). This is not a widely known practice in Jewish circles, though we have several examples: two documents among the **Dead Sea Scrolls** (4Q186 and 4Q561) are physiognomic texts that teach that a person's spiritual and moral state is revealed by the shape of his or her teeth, eyes, and other **Body** parts. A **Hechalot** text, called Hakkarat Panim l'Rabbi Yishmael, uses physiological criteria to determine if one is suited to learning mystical knowledge.[1] In a most unusual variation, Sefer Chasidim teaches that various ticks, itches, tingles, and other bodily irritations without obvious causation are actually **omens** of future events (162). The Zohar also takes some interest in the art (I:96b; II:71a–78a; ZCh 35b–37c). **Isaac Luria** and various Baalei Shem, such as Jonathan Eybeschitz, also had the ability to judge a person's character based on examining the face.[2]

1. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 218–24. Also see Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 48.
2. Scholem, ibid.

Pidyon ha-Ben: (פדיון הבן). *SEE*RANSOM.

Pidyon Nefesh: (פדיון נפש). A donation for the support of a spiritual virtuoso, a **baal shem**, or a righteous person. *SEE* KVITTEL.

Pikulin: A term found in the **Zohar** for a mystical explanation regarding the purpose of a commandment.

Pillars: (עמוד/Amud). Cosmic pillars form the foundation upon which the world rests. The **Bible** suggests they sit upon the floodwaters of the **abyss** (1 Sam. 2:8; Ps. 104:3). The**Zohar** states that they stand upon rucha, divine spirit, which in turn stands upon the **Torah** (Zohar I:77a). Each pillar is made up of the fiery divine substance called Chashmal (Mid. Konen 2:32–33).

Some say there are twelve such pillars; others say there are seven (Chag. 12b). In Pirke Avot, it is said the world stands upon three metaphorical pillars: worship, Torah, and acts of love (1:2). Elsewhere in the **Talmud**, basing his argument on Proverbs 10:25, Rabbi Eleazar claims there is only one pillar upon which the world stands: Righteousness. Taking this logic one step further, he declares the **Patriarchs** to be the pillar that sustains the universe (Shab. 88a,

119b). The **Bahir** describes the great “tree that is all,” which is also called a pillar, which also, implicitly, a **phallus** , which connects **heaven** and **Earth**:

> There is a single pillar extending from earth to heaven, and its name is Righteous. [The pillar] is named after the righteous. For if there are righteous people in the world, then it is strengthened, but if there are not, it is weakened. It supports the world, as it is written, *And righteousness is the foundation of the world* (Prov. 10:25). If it weakens, then it cannot sustain the world. Therefore, even if there is but one righteous person in the world, it is he who supports the world. Thus it is written, *And a righteous [one] is the foundation of the world*. (102; also see 22; 119)

In the Zohar the pillar, also symbolizing the divine phallus, takes on great metaphysical significance (Zohar I:186a). *SEE* PATRIARCHS AND MATRIARCHS; PHALLUS; RIGHTEOUS, THE.

Pinchas: High **priest** and grandson of **Aaron**. He achieved fame by thwarting a **plague** sweeping the Israelite camp in a most extraordinary manner—by impaling an Israelite prince and his Moabite paramour while they engaged in illicit (perhaps **ritual**) **sex** (Num. 25). **Zohar** teaches that his **soul** was possessed by the dead sons of Aaron, Nadav, and Avihu, who led him to bold action as a **Tikkun** for their sins (2:26b). He was one of the spies **Joshua** sent into Jericho, where he demonstrated the power to make himself invisible (Num. R. 26:1). He ascended to **heaven**, like **Elijah**, by pronouncing the **Tetragrammaton** (J Targum Numbers 31:8).Later tradition claims **Elijah**, also an exemplar of zealousness, was Pinchas reincarnated (PdRE 29, 47; Num. R. 21:3). One tradition claims he and Elijah were actually incarnations of the Ofan angel **Sandalfon**.

Pinchas ben Yair: Talmudic Sage and wonderworker (ca. 3rd century). Either the son-in-law of Simon bar Yochai (**Talmud**), or his father-in-law (**Zohar**), Pinchas was famous for his miraculous feats. He communed with animals and natural entities. He once caused a river to split in order that he and those traveling with him could cross on dry ground. He even resurrected the dead (Chul. 7a–b; J. De. 1:3).

Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer (PdRE): A **Midrash**, credited to the Talmudic Sage Eliezer ben Hycanus, which contains many fantastic traditions and esoteric teachings. It is arranged as a continuous narrative, giving an account from **Creation** to the coming of the **Messiah**. It focuses extensively on the events of Creation, and

includes esoteric traditions about the **angels**, **Adam Kadmon** , and the expulsion from **Eden**.

Pirke de-Rabbi Ishmael (PdRI): An alternative name for Hechalot Rabbati.

Pirke Hechalot: An alternate title for Hechalot Rabbati**.**

Pishon: (פישון). One of the four rivers that flowed from **Eden** (Gen. 2). In the **Zohar**, it signifies the “right side” of the divine **emanations** flowing through the **sefirot**(I: 181b).

Pitron Chalomot: The most comprehensive Jewish book on **dream** interpretation and oneiromancy, Pitron Chalomot was written by Solomon ben Jacob Almoli.

Piznai: (פזנאי). A lilot/**succubus**who seduces men and breeds **demon** children from their **semen** (Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews 5:166). *SEE* NOCTURNAL EMISSION.

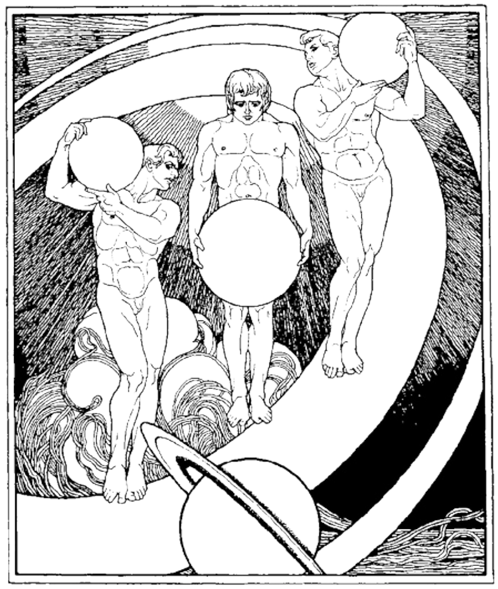
Plagues: The ten plagues that God employed to humble Pharaoh and **Egypt** (Ex. 4–12) are repeatedly called “great and awesome signs and wonders” and are the archetypal manifestations of divine **judgment**. The ten plagues are as follows:

1. Blood
2. Frogs
3. Lice (or gnats)
4. Wild beasts (or flies)
5. Cattle disease
6. Boils
7. Hail
8. Locusts
9. Darkness
10. Death of the firstborn

In Deuteronomy, God assures Israel that the “plagues of the Egyptians” will never be visited upon them if Israel harkens to God’s word. The initials of the ten plagues were inscribed on the **rod** that **Moses** used to unleash them (S of S R. 8). Rabbi Akiba taught that in fact the Egyptians were actually smitten with no less than 250 plagues (Haggadah for Passover).

In the time of **Abraham**, the pharaoh who took **Sarah** into his harem (Gen. 12:6) also suffered ten plagues, a foreshadowing of what would happen to **Egypt** during the **Exodus** (PdRE 26). *SEE* DISEASE; HEALING; PASSOVER.

Planets: (מזלות/Mazzalot). In the **Bible**, there are oblique hints of the idea that celestial objects can influence or affect humans (see especially Ps. 121). By the 6th BCE, the prophets are railing against Jews being involved in astral cults, but presumably this is a variation of ancient Near Eastern polytheism.



Planetary motion by E. M. Lilien

It was not until the rise of Greco-Roman influence, with its enthusiasm for **astrology** as we think of it today, that the "natural" influence of planets starts to be taken seriously in Jewish circles. Thus Jacob Asher regards the word MaZaL, "planet," as an acronym for ***M*****azria** ***Z*****era** ***L*'minehu**, "plants that reproduce according to their kind," signifying that the celestial spheres govern the growing season (ha-Tur). The poem El Adon personifies the planets as entities that constantly praise God.

By the medieval period, Jewish astrologers were earnestly discussing how the **planets** in their motions hold sway over specific spheres of life in the sublunary world. Thus, one can read in Jewish texts like Sefer **Raziel**how Mars influences matters of **blood**, war, wounds, and **iron**, while Mercury influences matters pertaining to writing, arts, and learning. Presumably, knowing this allowed the practitioner to choose propitious times to engage in these matters. As the Middle Ages progressed, both Hermetic traditions and Arab theories of planetary emanations became increasingly accepted by Jewish thinkers.[1] With the rise of modernity, however, Jews just as rapidly assimilated the new celestial-mechanical worldview, so the Jewish spiritual traditions related to the planets

continues to spark interest only in the most traditional segments of Jewish society. *SEE* ASTROLOGY; BRONTOLOGY; MAGIC; MAZAL; ZODIAC.

1. Langerman, “Magic and Astrology,” vol. 3, 18–22.

Planets, Seven Angels of the: The angels who govern the heavenly bodies (visible to the naked eye) are **Michael**, Barakiel, **Gabriel**, Dodeniel, Chesidiel, Tzadikiel, and A’aniel.

Pleroma: “[Divine] fullness.” The totality of divine powers; the aggregate of divine attributes, intellects, virtues, and forces. Though the term is Greek and arises from Gnosticism, when applied to a Jewish context it refers to the divine order: the divine limbs, the **seven heavens**, the **merkavah**, the **glory**, the **Throne of Glory**, the footstool, the **angels**, the **sefirot**, the **Partzufim**, or any of the features of divinity Jews differentiate from or within the **Godhead** in their metaphysics. The God of Israel is regarded as one, but is, upon examination, rarely regarded as simple.[1]

1. Leibes, *Studies in Jewish Myth and Messianism*, 33–34.

Poison: In the popular gentile imagination of the Middle Ages, Jews were masters of the occult science of poisons (along with **sorcery**, **healing**, and **alchemy**). According to one anti-Jewish legend, Jewish physicians took a vow to poison every tenth Christian patient under their care. The reality that some Jews, as international traders, handled and sold exotic spices, herbs, drugs, and other substances no doubt contributed to this calumny.

A variation on this theme is that of well poisoning. According to this pernicious **myth**, in their satanic hatred of humanity, Jews would poison wells used by Christians. Popular hysterias about Jewish mass poisoning swept various regions of Europe. This accusation peaked in the 14th century, when such accusations occurred in many places, usually in the wake of a plague.[1]

Variations on the theme of poisoning continue to this day. In contemporary America, radical groups and conspiracy theorists claim that AIDS is a part of a Jewish plot to destroy the African-American community.[2] Similar accusations have been made regarding the prevalence of drugs in minority communities. A popular belief in the Middle East is that Jews have put sterility drugs into chewing gum with the purpose of weakening the Arab world.[3] *SEE* BLOOD LIBEL; PHARMACOPOEIA.

1. H. H. Ben-Sassoon, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 486–87. Also see H. H.Ben-Sassoon, ed., *Trial and Achievement: Currents in Jewish History* (Jersusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1976), 251–56.

2. D. Johnson, “Black-Jewish Hostility Rouses Leaders in Chicago to Action” *New York Times*, July 29, 1988, accessed 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/1988/07/29/us/black-jewish-hostility-rouses-leaders-in-chicago-to-action.html.

3. B. Gellman, “Pop! Went the Tale of the Bubble Gum Spiked with Sex Hormones,” *Washington Post,* July 28, 1997, accessed 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/mideast/july/28/gum2807.htm.

Polemics, Magic: The accusation of Jews being malevolent magicians, sorcerers, or practitioners of **witchcraft** has been a polemic that continues to this very day.

The specific case of the Jews aside, the claim that an opponent is engaging in **sorcery** was already an established trope of religious polemics in antiquity: My wonders are religious **miracle**s; your religion has mere magic (Ant. 2:284). The licit Roman civic cults said as much of the wondrous feats of the mystery sects. While the distinction between a miracle and **magic** seems clear to those who embrace a particular faith, defining what is a miracle vs. what is sorcery is more problematic than believers might think. Mesopotamian theurgists performed their rituals by the authority of the gods Enki (patron of magicians) and Asalluhi (patron of exorcists). Greeks believed magic powers were the gift of Asclepius or Apollo. Egyptian court sorcerers also derived their power from their gods. Christians regard the feats of **Jesus** to be a sign of his divinity.[1] Endless ink has been expended on trying to make fine distinctions that would definitively distinguish the feats credited to Jesus from, say, those attested to Gautama Buddha.

The Church fathers often accused Jews of being wizards (Dialogue with Trypho 85:3; Sermons of Chysostomus; Council of Laodicea, Canons 35–37). In late antiquity and medieval Christendom, though itself a culture suffused with belief in its own miracles, wonder-working **priests**, and angelic interventions, this cliché polemic morphed into the far more egregious accusation that Jews were in legion with the devil, a belief that resulted in the persecution of whole Jewish communities and the death of thousands.[2]

Within the context of Judaism itself, there is no firm taxonomy on what makes a deed of power licit or illicit; all such judgments are impressionistic (“I know it when I see it” rule), and seem to change over time and cultural context. For example, the paradigmatic battle between **Moses** and the wizards of **Egypt** (Ex. 7:8–8:15) ends with the wizards admitting that Moses’s wonders were unparalleled, a claim readily accepted by Jews, but a Pagan reader in the ancient world would just as reasonably understood this story as a contest between theurgists and their patron deities, where one magician and his god proved more powerful than his adversary, but the powers themselves were of a kind. The

distinction between Moses and the courtier sorcerers was likely perceived as one of scale, not of a different order. Both Moses and **Solomon** came to be perceived in the popular culture of Christendom as magicians.

Rabbinic and medieval sources were not immune to making the same kind of invidious comparison that they were subjected to by Christians and Muslim, arguing, for example, that Jesus was merely a magician whose feats derived from his time in **Egypt** (Matthew 2:13–19), the wellspring of witchcraft (Sanh. 104b; Kid. 49b; Toldot Yeshu). *SEE* MAGIC; PRAYER.

1. W. Miller, ed., *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000), 61.
2. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*.

Pomegranate: *SEE* FRUIT.

Possession: Possession in Judaism comes in two types—demonic and ghostly, or pneumatic. There is much overlap in these categories, but each will be treated separately below:

A) Possession, Demonic: (עבור רע/Ibbur Ra, also Nikhpeh; Achuz Sheid; K'fao Sheid). Seizure by **evil** spirits or demons is a phenomenon going back to biblical times.

While there are numerous references in the **Bible** to people being filled with divine spirit (Eldad and Medad) or the spirit of **wisdom** (Joshua), there is only one reference to evil spirit possession in the Hebrew Scriptures: **Saul** (1 Sam. 16:23, 18:12). This spirit could evidently be temporarily exorcised by means of **music**, but it never permanently left Saul. The apocryphal book of Tobit is devoted to a story of demonic haunting and **exorcism**(though it is not about a "possession" in the sense we are using here, of a living **soul** being bodily taken over).

In historical documents from outside Jewish tradition, there are several references to the phenomenon of demon possession among Jews. The Gospels make repeated mention of demon possession. **Jesus** reportedly exorcised several people, including Mary Magdalene (Mark 1:24). He himself was accused of being possessed by a demon (John 8:49). Even given the doubtful historical reliability of these stories, they at least suggest that belief in demon possession was part of the intellectual landscape of 1st-century Jewish Palestine.[1]

The **Dead Sea Scrolls** include several exorcism liturgies (11Q11). There are a few references to demonic possession in the **Talmud** and classical **Midrash** (Me. 17b; Num. R. 19.8; PdRK 1:74; Tanh. Chukkat 8). Interestingly, there is

even a homily about how to judge the moral culpability of a person who is possessed (PdRE 12). **incantation bowls** and medieval texts found in the Cairo Geniza link various illnesses to demonic attack, indicating that at the level of popular Jewish culture, possession (at least in the form of invasive illness being seen as demonic) was taken seriously.[2]

There is a marked upsurge in accounts of possession starting in the 16th century, though these are mostly reports of pneumatic rather than demonic possession. Yet, incidents of possession by evil spirits are recorded in Jewish literature up to this day, almost exclusively in traditional Jewish circles.

Many symptoms are linked to possession, including compulsive deviant social, sexual, and religious behaviors. An outstanding feature of all forms of possession is **xenoglossia**, an alien voice speaking from within the possessed person. Numerous authorities have attempted to distinguish ibbur ra from mental illness, though many others, from Jesus in the 1st century up to people in the present, regarded insanity in and of itself to be a sign of demonic possession. *SEE* BONE; DEMONS; EXORCISM; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY

B) Possession, Ghostly: (אחוז דבוק/Achuz Dibbuk, also Ibbur ra)**.** Belief that a spirit of the dead can possess the living is a surprisingly modern phenomenon in Judaism. While stories of demonic possession appear as early as biblical times, the first description of pneumatic possession does not appear until the first, in the writings of Josephus (*Ant*. 8:2, 8:5):

> It [a special root] quickly drives away those called demons, which are no other than the spirits of the wicked, that enter into men that are alive and kill them, unless they can obtain some help against them. (*Wars* 7:6, 3)

The idea that a **soul** of the dead could possess the living really only revives in medieval **Kabbalah** . The **Zohar**, for example, offers accounts of the biblical figures Nadav and Avihu, who having died prematurely for an offense, temporarily possess their nephew Pinchas in order to affect a **Tikkun**, a rectification of their souls:

> If there is even one organ in which the Holy One does not dwell, then he [the person] will be brought back into the world of reincarnation because of this organ, until he becomes perfected in his parts, that all of them may be perfect in the image of God. (T.Z.)

The Zohar limits examples of this phenomenon to the ancient past. And so far as I can tell, the first contemporary accounts of spirit possession do not appear until

the 16th century.[3] Eventually, many tracts documented incidents of dybbuk possession, such as Sefer ha-Hezyonot, Sha'ar Ruach ha-Kodeshim, Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah, Emek ha-Melech, and Sefer Nishmat Hayyim:

> The spirit which took possession of a young man was the spirit of one who, in his life, had sinned egregiously and that thereafter could find no peace. It had entered the youth's body after having been forced to flee its previous abode, the body of a cow which was about to be slaughtered. (Ma'aseh Buch)

There are three related forms of possession described in the literature: beneficent possession by either an angelic being, usually termed a **maggid** (guide), or a righteous **ancestor** (ibbur),[4] or malevolent possession by a poltergeist. An evil spirit is usually referred to as a ruach (spirit), dybbuk (clinging ghost), or tzeruf (changling or additional soul). This entry concentrates on the latter phenomenon.

In most of the accounts preserved in Judaism, souls of the dead seek to possess people either as a way of finding refuge from the punishments inflicted on them in the afterlife, or out of a desire for sexual gratification (a variation on the tradition of the **incubus**). According to Judah Petayah of Baghdad, many spirits find themselves adrift in the world of the living because of sex; their ghostly existence is a punishment for gross licentiousness while they were living (*Minchat Yehudah*). Lurianic theory developed a very elaborate model of how a soul may have its transmigrations impeded by unresolved sins. Such souls must find a material host to enter and any human is far preferable to an animal, plant, or inanimate object.

Based on recorded incidents, many victims of possession are (young) women, while almost all possessing spirits are male.[5] An outstanding feature of all forms of possession is **xenoglossia**, an alien voice speaking from within the possessed person (*Zera Kodesh*).

While literary accounts of ghostly possession peak in the 17th to 18th centuries, periodic reports of spiritual possession continue across Jewish cultures up to this day, with the most recent publicly revealed incidents occurring (on videotape) in Israel.[6]

Jewish communities at different times employed different methods of **exorcism**, though the most consistent Jewish strategy appears to be simply to talk the spirit to death.[7] *SEE* IBBUR; MEDIUM.

1. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*.
2. Bar-Ilan, "Exorcism by Rabbis," 1–14; Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judaism*, 73–98.
3. J. H. Chajes, "Judgments Sweetened: Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern Jewish Culture," *Journal of Early Modern History* 1, no. 2 (1997): 124–69.

4. Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judaism*, 101–24.

5. Ibid., 41–72.

6. M. Shaviv, “Dybbuk Exorcism, Live in Israel,” *The Jewish Chronicle* (Jan. 7, 2010), accessed 2015, http://www.thejc.com/blogpost/dybbuk-exorcism-live-israel.

7. Patai, “Exorcism and Xenoglossia Among the Safed Mystics.”

Potah: (פותה). “Fool.” The angel (or **demon**) of forgetfulness frequently mentioned in medieval texts. He is the nemesis of the Sar ha-Torah (Machzor Vitry, 115–16; Havdalah de Rabbi Akiva; Sefer Assufot).

Prayer: (תפלה/Tefillah, also Bakash; Berachah). While the **Torah** devotes whole chapters and almost 200 mitzvot to sacrificial worship, there is no divine commandment that explicitly directs the Children of Israel to worship via prayer (verbal offerings) either spontaneously or at appointed times, either privately or communally. RaMBaM acknowledges as much in his Mishnah Torah Hilchot Tefillah 1.1, but goes on to build on inferential arguments for the importance of prayer. Germaine to this encyclopedia, however, is the question of what, if anything, distinguishes prayer from **incantation**. This is a topic of ongoing debate among academics. Since Sir James George Fraser’s taxonomy first appeared in The Golden Bough in 1922, popular convention regards prayer to be a supplication, an appeal for favor from a deity, knowing that the god is free to ignore the plea. By contrast, an incantation is both mechanistic and coercive; if the rite is performed correctly, the deity is compelled to fulfill the wish of the initiate. The scholar Joseph Geiger rejected this distinction entirely:

> Magic, as a definite and consistent category of human behavior simply does not exist … The beliefs and rituals of “the others” are that which is always defined as “magic,” superstition … The sentence “So-and-so is/was a witch” tells us nothing about so-and-so’s beliefs and actions. The only information we are sure of, that which can be drawn from the statement, is the relationship of the speaker to the person he speaks of and their mutual social relationship: the person spoken of is seen by the speaker as powerful, marginal, and dangerous.[1]

But even if one accepts Fraser’s distinction, prayer in Judaism is regarded to be very powerful in affecting all kinds of change, including effectuating the miraculous, including in the Pleroma itself (B.B. 116a; ShB 50).

The function of prayer has varied and evolved, depending on the time and Jewish community:

• Prayer as appeal for divine presence or intervention (1 Sam. 1; Ben Porat Yosef, 21a).

• Prayer as self-revelation: The act of prayer is a method toward self-knowledge and transformative, rather than changing either God or the world (Ps. 69:14; **Tur**, Orach Chayyim, 98; M. T. Tefillah 1.1; Guide 3:51).

• Prayer as **theurgy**: Prayer is not "heard" by an actively listening, personal God, but serves as a kind of key to activate and draw down necessary divine processes (Ps. 68:19; Likkutai Maharil, 3b; Masekhet Avot 3a). This is the dominant, though not exclusive, kabbalistic understanding of the function of prayer.

Many esoteric movements in Judaism have believed in and taught sodot ha-tefillah, that Jewish liturgy has an esoteric dimension and **secret** power that can only be tapped by those with the occult knowledge and right **kavanah**.[2] The Circle of the Unique Cherub formulated an esoteric rationale for prayer (Pesak ha-Yirah). For another example, the **German Pietist** used to draw out the prayers recited for the conclusion of the **Sabbath** for the benefit of the dead, because it was believed that the **souls** being punished in **Gehenna** were released for the duration of the Sabbath.[3] Medievals also believed that some destructive angels had names ending in the letter payh (the "p" or "f" sound) and that reciting a prayer text that contained no words with final payhs, such as the Yotzer Or prayer, would protect against such **demons** .

Over time, the function of prayer also evolved in Jewish esoteric thought. The **Zohar**, for example, treats prayer not so much as a means for dialogue with the divine, but rather as a **ritual** leading to devekut, union with God. It even characterizes the process of giving the soul over to God in prayer as a kind of (temporary) **Death** (Zohar II:201a, 213b; III:21a–b). And, as with almost all aspects of the kabbalistic approach to ritual, prayer foremost is seen as a mechanism for activating world-sustaining and world-repairing processes within the Pleroma. *SEE* MAGIC.

1. Y. Harari, *Early Jewish Magic: Research, Method and Sources* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2010), 56.

2. Idel, *Hasidism*, 157–58.

3. Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*, 143. Also see Dan, "The Emergence of Mystical Prayer," in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism (*New York: Association for Jewish Studies, 1982), 85–120.

Prayer of Jacob: A magical text of antiquity, it describes how the **Patriarch Jacob** invokes God for **wisdom** and divine powers. There are a number of pagan

themes in the text, so it is a matter of controversy whether the author was a Jewish syncretist or a pagan.[1]

1. Davila, “Ancient Magic (The Prayer of Jacob).”

Preida, Rabbi: Talmudic Sage (ca. 4th century). He was rewarded with a life span of four hundred years because of his devotion to teaching **Torah**. His merit was such that because of him, his entire generation was vouchsafed eternity in **Eden** (Eruv. 54b; Sefer Yuhasin).

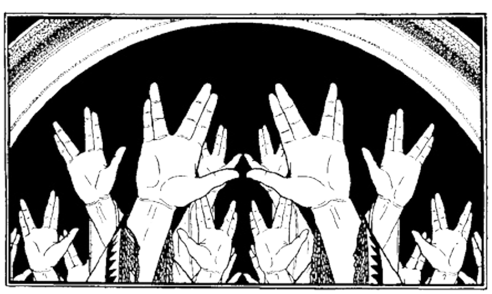
Priesthood and Priest: (כהונה/Kehunah; ˆhwk/Kohan). The priests of ancient Israel were in charge of the sacrificial cult in the **Temple** and as such were spiritual conduits between Israel and God. They also functioned as diviners, diagnosticians, and possibly as healers.

The priesthood was a hereditary affair, all priests being descendants of the clan of **Aaron**. They also possessed no land of their own, but depended on the Temple donations and sacrifices for their upkeep.

In order for the priests to function within the sacred grounds of the Temple without risk of transgressing or polluting the divine space, they were governed by an elaborate set of physical requirements, dress codes, and **purity**rules. In time, the clothing items and purity practices used by the priests in preparation for approaching the holy became archetypes that would later evolve into the kind of **purification** rites used by subsequent generations of mystics and magicians seeking to access divine power.[1]

The High Priest controlled the Urim and Thummim, by which he could address questions to God of national import. *SEE* ALTAR; PINCHAS; SACRIFICE; TABERNACLE.

1. Metzger and Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 608–11.



The Priestly Blessing by E. M. Lilien

Priestly Blessing: (ברכת כוהנים/Birkat Cohanim). A three-fold blessing, “May YHVH bless you and guard you/May YHVH cause His countenance to shine upon you and be gracious to you/May YHVH lift up His countenance toward

you and grant you peace," said by the **priest** over the whole Jewish people at the times of festival gatherings. The **ritual** is performed with the hands of the priest held "Vulcan style," with the thumb and fingers forming three prongs, the shape of a "shin."

The Priestly Benediction includes characteristics of an **incantation**, being made up of progressive verses of three, five, and seven words. It invokes God's power to protect the person and grant material prosperity and enlightenment. Each line contains the **Tetragrammaton**. From its words, mystics have uncovered the esoteric twelve-part and twenty-two letter **names of God**. It can counteract bad **omens** and **dreams**.

Priluka, Isaac: Rabbi and exorcist (Ukrainian, ca. 19th century).

Prince of Fire: *SEE* PRINCES OF FEAR.

Prince of the Congregation: A messianic moniker that appears in the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. The Prince is the war leader of Israel in the great eschatological battle against evil (CD VII 19–20; 4Q161; 4Q285).

Prince of the Sea: (שר ים/Sar Yam or Sar shel Yam). Possibly either an **angel** or a **demon** , the Sar Yam is at times identified with **Leviathan** or Rahav (Ex. R. 34:1; B.B. 74b). Some Jews in Talmudic times evidently sought to placate this numinous entity by throwing **sacrifices** into water, a practice denounced by the Sages, who could exercise some authority over the Prince (Chul. 41b; J. Sanh. 13a–d).

Prince of the World: (שר עולם/Sar Olam; Sar ha-Olam). An angelic title, sometimes applied to **Metatron**, sometimes to **Michael** (Yev. 16b; Chul. 60a). This is the **angel** that pleads for the coming of the **Messiah** (Sanh. 94a; Gen. R. 33.7). In **Kabbalah** , he is**Malchut** , the lowest sefirah (T.Z. I:181b).

Princes of Envy and Enmity: An array of **demons** , each the commander of a demon legion, mentioned in Treatise on the Left Emanation.

Princes of Fear: (שר פוחד). These punishing angels will descend on anyone who misuses the power of divine names and/or theurgic **rituals**. They are mentioned in **Hechalot** texts and in the stories of Israel ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov.

Privy Demon: (שר בית הכסא/Sheid Beit ha-Kissei). Tractate Berachot tells us **demons** , though a constant threat, like to lurk in places of impurity (6a–b). Thus

the **angels** that normally protect a person,

> For He will order his angels to guard you wherever you go. (Ps. 91:11)

are weakened. Therefore it’s considered impolite to force the angels to escort you to the restroom:

> Upon entering a toilet, a person should recite: Honor yourselves, honored ones, holy ones who serve Above. Give honor to the God of Israel, leave me alone until I enter and fulfill my desire, and then I will return to you. (Ber. 60a)

This gesture of respect, however, makes one vulnerable to a particular demon that likes toilets and spreads plagues to mankind (Zohar III:76b). This is the sheid Beit ha-kisei, the djinn of the privy. In the same way one becomes vulnerable to spirits while at the toilet, one also is subject to assault by **witches** or the **evil eye**:

> Palpate yourself before sitting, but do not sit and palpate, for if one sits and then palpates, should witchcraft be used against him, even as far away as Aspamia one will not be immune from it. And if he forgets and does sit and then palpates, what is his remedy? When he rises he should say thus: Not for me, not for me; not for takhtim, nor takhtim [literally, “bottoms”]; not for these nor any part of these; neither the sorceries of sorcerers nor the sorceries of sorceresses! (Ber. 62a)

The concern here is, quite literally, with having created an opening to attack. In other places in the **Talmud**, we learn that unclean spirits enter through the orifices of the **Body** like the mouth and eyes. Apparently, so too the anus. That was the formula against witchcraft, this is phrase against demons:

> For [defeating] a sheid of the privy one should say thus: “On the head of a lion and on the snout of a lioness did we find the demon Bar Shirika Panda; with a bed of leeks I hurled him down, [and] with the jawbone of an ass I smote him.” (Shab. 67a)

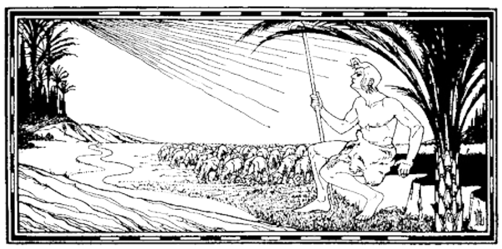
But an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If spells are good, **amulets** are even better:

> Rabbah bar bar Hannah said: We used to walk behind R’ Yochanan,
> And when he needed to go to the bathroom—
> When he was carrying a book of Midrash he’d give it to us.
> But when he was carrying tefillin, he wouldn’t give them to us.

He would say: "Since the Rabbis permit us [to take tefillin into a privy],
They will guard me [against spirits]!" (Ber. 23a–b)

In the Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayyim 3.3, another preventative is prescribed: If one wishes to palpate the rectum with a pebble or a piece of wood in order to open up the hole, he should do so prior to sitting but not after sitting in order to thwart **sorcery**. *SEE* TOILET; UNCLEAN SPIRITS OR IMPURE SPIRITS.

Prophecy and Prophets: (נבואה/**Nevuah**). Unlike the Eastern Semites, who favored omen reading and impetrated divination, among many Western Semitic peoples (including the Israelites) the preferred source of augury and revelation was the intuitive human oracle. So unlike the baru diviners of Mesopotamia, who were essentially technicians and observers, the prophets of the West were individuals with mediumistic, mystical, and occult predispositions.[1]



The divine call by E. M. Lilien

The most common method of inducing a **vision** among early Semitic prophets appears to have been achieving a state of **ecstasy** by means of **music**, **dance**, or even self-mutilation (1 Sam. 10, 19; 1 Kings 18).

While biblical prophecy clearly has its roots in these Semitic practices, the nature of prophecy seems to have evolved in the biblical period.[2] Early in Israelite history, there was a distinction between a prophet (navi) and a seer (roeh or chozeh), the distinction being that the prophet was a shaman like ecstatic who communed with divine forces while in a **trance**, while the seer relied on **dreams** and visions in the darkness (1 Sam. 9:1–10:6). This distinction doesn't apply to the case of **Moses**, who appears to have his prophetic experiences without being in a mind-altering state.

In later Israelite culture, this distinction vanishes and the terms are used interchangeably (2 Sam. 14:11; Isa. 29:10), though the classical prophets continue to rail against various forms of "false prophecy," among which they include using **wine** to induce drunken **dreams** visions (Isa. 28), ecstatic trances (Zech. 13), consulting spirits, or experiencing automatic speech (Isa. 8).

According to the Sages, there are ten types of prophets: envoys, men of faith, men of God, servants, seers, messengers, angels, visionaries, sentinels, and prophets. Prophecy comes in ten forms: parable, metaphor, riddle, speech, saying, dream, command, pronouncement, prophecy, and vision (Mishnat R. Eliezer 6; AdRN 34; Gen. R. 44:6). By tradition, there were forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses in Israel (Shab. 104a). All the prophets perceived the divine only through the medium of the **speculum**, filters that shielded them from the reality-annulling power of pure spirit (Lev. R. 1:14; Mishnat R. Eliezer 6). Later **mysticism** equated these speculi with the **sefirot**. Most prophets had to view the divine reality through the filter of up to nine specula. Only Moses experienced prophetic visions through the special clarity of just a single speculum (Yev. 49b).

The mechanism of prophecy among the classical prophets is much debated, and the prophets themselves do not give detailed accounts of how their prophetic experiences unfold.[3] **Isaiah**, **Ezekiel**, and **Zechariah** describe vivid visions full of light and symbols. Zechariah described his visions as like a dream, and it has been suggested that Isaiah's vision in the **Temple** (Isa. 6) was the result of **incubation**, though there is no explicit testimony to this in the text itself. Moreover, elsewhere in the book of Isaiah, the practice of incubation is condemned (8:19–22, 19:3). Ezekiel is physically bowled over by the Spirit of God, which then enters him (Ezek. 1–2). While it has been popular to argue that all prophets experienced their revelations in a state of ecstasy, the evidence for this is spotty. In the accounts of Moses, Amos, Hosea, and Jeremiah, evidence of ecstasy is utterly absent. It is also not at all clear that the classical prophets were "taken over" or that they simply "channeled" a divine voice (enthusiasm), as there are ample examples of the prophets conversing with God, indicating they retained their own consciousness and their own will during the prophetic experience. The **Talmud** claims the spirit of prophecy only descends upon one who is in a state of joy; anger causes prophecy to depart (Pes. 117a; Shab. 30b).

According to some, true prophecy can only happen in the Land of , though there were a few exceptions which only occurred because of the purifying presence of **water** (MdRI Bo, Pisha 1). Still, there are enough exceptions to this rule found in Scripture that this claim is hard to sustain. This is especially the case because the tradition teaches that the gentile **nations** were also sent prophets, seven in total—Job, Jethro, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, and Balaam—with Balaam, son of Beor, being the greatest (B.B. 15b; Num. R. 14:20). Gradually, as the Shekhinah came to reside among Israel, the spirit of

prophecy disappeared among the nations (Lev. R. 1:12). In a related vein, the **Zohar** suggests **circumcision** is a prerequisite to prophecy (I:89a), even though this claim flies in the face of the biblical and rabbinic traditions of both female and gentile prophets. The Kabbalists also teach that prophecy flows from the feminine side of the **Godhead**.[4]

After the Babylonian exile, the institution of prophecy fades from Israel, perhaps because it reverted to the older ecstatic mode and Jews of the time found such prophecies unreliable (Zech. 13). From about 300 BCE on, the **Bible** itself, supplemented by **omens**, becomes the preferred source of divine revelation. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were the last of the recognized prophets. Prophecy, it is said, had now been given over to children and the insane (Sanh. 11a; B.B. 12a–b).

The Talmudic Sages insisted God's will is only made known through a Bat Kol or a visitation by **Elijah**. Yet numerous mystics have believed attenuated forms of prophecy can be experienced through ecstatic mystical practices (*Sha'arei ha-Kedushah*), and a number of Kabbalists and Chasidic masters have been given the title "prophet" or "seer," though any claim to true prophecy made in postbiblical Judaism is highly controversial and generally dismissed by all but a few true believers.[5] Certainly no one since the 3rd BCE has been universally recognized in Israel as a prophet. Prophecy will truly return to Israel with the final appearance of Elijah and the advent of the Messianic age. *SEE* DIVINATION; HOLY SPIRIT.

1. A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 206–28.
2. B. J. Bamberger, "The Changing Image of the Prophet in Jewish Thought," The 1966 Goldenson Lecture, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.
3. A. J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (Philadelphia, PA: JPS, 1962), 324–425.
4. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 70–317, 343–44.
5. A. J. Heschel, *Prophetic Inspiration After the Prophets* (New York, KTAV, 1985). Also see Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 296.

Protocols of the Elders of Zion: An anti-Semitic tract that purports to reveal a **secret** cabal of Jewish elders striving for world domination. This rambling fabrication of the Czarist Russian secret police has some quaint aspects. For example, it reviles Jews for undermining aristocracy, promoting liberal ideas, and spreading democracy as a means to take world control.

Providence: *SEE* FATE; FREE WILL.

Psalms: (תהלים). The 150 poems/hymns, ascribed to the authorship of **David**, which make up the biblical book of Psalms. There are also several psalms that

appear in other books of the **Bible**, most notably the books of Samuel and Jonah. Noncanonical psalms have been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls collection (11Q11; 4Q435–38).

The use of the biblical psalms for **Prophecy**, **divination**, protection, and even magical purposes is very ancient. The earliest evidence of this appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls and continues to this day. In the MiddleAges, an anonymous author wrote Shimmush Tehillim ("Practical Psalms"), a workbook for using various psalms in **amulets**, **rituals** of protection, and **theurgy**.

There is a similar list of magical applications found in a Judeo-Arabic translation of the Psalms by Ezekiel Shemtov David. Examples of psalms that can be used for practical benefit include:

Psalm 1 can help counteract a potential miscarriage.

Psalm 9 can be used for healing an ailing child.

Psalm 16 and 19 are most useful in uncovering a thief. The psalms are recited as part of a divining ritual in which the names of the suspects are written in clay and then dissolved with living **water**.



Psalm 16 on an amulet

In a Cairo Geniza fragment, Psalm 23 is included in a ritual for asking **dream** questions of the angel **Michael**.

Psalm 29 is recited over a body of water as part of a ritual to make revelations appear in the reflecting surface (Pes. 112a; Sefer Tagi; Perush ha-Merkavah).

Psalm 31 is used to combat the **evil eye**.

Psalm 49 is recited to reduce a **fever**.

Psalm 67, which consists of precisely forty-nine words, is read during the forty-nine days of the **omer**. Done with the proper **kavanah**, it protects one against imprisonment (Abraham Galante).

Psalm 91, based on the language of verses 7 and 10, is identified by the **Talmud** as "a song of afflictions" (Shev. 15b) and is without a doubt the most frequently cited psalm for defense against illness and spiritual attacks.

Psalm 109, especially verse 6, is useful in performing **exorcism** when recited in reverse.

Psalm 119, the longest psalm, and one constructed on an acrostic structure, has protective uses for every letter-verse.

Psalm 121 is an excellent tool for protecting against threats that come in the night.

The Chasidic master Yehiel Meir Lipschitz, the Tehillim Yid ("Psalm Jew") believed that any Jew with troubles who came to him could be saved from any hardship, given appropriate psalms to recite. *SEE* AMULET; APOCRYPHA; BIBLE; BIBLIOMANCY; DEAD SEA SCROLLS.

Psalms of Exorcism: A text consisting of five columns, perhaps four **psalms** (the canonical Psalm 91 and three noncanonical psalms, designated 11Q11) found in the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. The material likely constituted a single liturgy intended to be used in exorcising **disease**-causing **demon** . The first column is in a very poor state and only fragments of phrases are readable. The remaining columns survived in enough readable condition to get a sense of the structure. The psalms are to be recited over the victim as he responds "amen" and "selah" to their adjurations.

Pseudepigrapha: Religious literature, usually containing some form of divine revelation, which is (falsely) credited to a worthy figure of antiquity. In Israelite religion, before the creation of the biblical canon, people received their divine communications primarily through the phenomenon of living oracles—prophets. In Early Judaism, as canonized written accounts of those prophetic oracles (Scriptures) came to increasingly be regarded as the only reliable source of God's will, those who continued to experience revelatory moments and wanted

to share these new oracles found it more and more difficult to be taken seriously. Because of this, the phenomenon of ascribing such insights to ancient authorities arose.[1]

Deuteronomy, a book which purports to be from the hand of **Moses**, yet was not known of until centuries after Moses, may be the oldest example of pseudepigrapha in Judaism.[2] Other biblical books suspected of being pseudepigraphic include Daniel and Ecclesiastes.

The vast majority of such writing, however, arose during the Greco-Roman period, once the biblical canon was closed. The number of works ascribed to biblical figures, both important and peripheral, multiplied exponentially. They include such works as the Apocalypse of Isaiah, the **Testament of Levi**, and, of course, the many Enochean books. Magical books, too, can achieve a greater aura of authority by claiming ancient authorship, as exemplified by works like the **Testament of Solomon**, **Sefer ha-Razim**, the Eighth Book of Moses, and **Sword Of Moses.**.

Mystics, too, will use this strategy to reach a wider audience with their novel and radical metaphysics. The **Bahir** and the **Zohar**, for example, both claim to be works of greater antiquity than they in fact are.[3]

1. Metzger and Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 629–31.
2. J. Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia, PA: JPS, 1996), xix–xxvi.
3. Dan, *The 'Unique Cherub' Circle*, 1–16.

Pseudo-Sa'adia: A mystical-magical commentary on **Sefer Yetzirah** that is wrongly attributed to Sa'adia Gaon, the 10th-century Babylonian polymath. It is instead the composition coming out of a group of little-known medieval mystics, possibly the Circle of the Unique Cherub. It is most notable for providing further details on the **golem** traditions.[1]

1. Dan, *The 'Unique Cherub' Circle*, 125–41.

Pulsa D'nura: (פּלסא דנורא). "Lashes of Fire." A divine punishment and **curse**. The **Talmud** first mentions "lashes of fire" in relation to the four Sages who entered PaRDeS, when it relates how the angel **Metatron** was subjected to sixty pulsei de-nura for impertinence:

> Of him [Elisha ben Abuyah, a mystic turned heretic] Scripture says: Suffer not thy mouth to bring thy flesh into guilt. What does it refer to?—He [Elisha, while on an ecstatic journey through the heavenly palaces] saw that permission was granted to Metatron to sit and write down the merits of Israel. Said he: It is taught as a tradition that on high there is no sitting and no

> emulation, and no back, and no weariness. Perhaps—God forfend!—there are two divinities! [Thereupon] they [the angels of discipline] led Metatron forth, and punished him with sixty fiery lashes, saying to him: Why didst thou not rise before him when thou didst see him? (*Chag.* 15a)

These lashes were a supernal punishment on a spirit. Sefer Zohar has the most information on the lashes. It, too, links the phenomenon to Metatron, for it describes pulsei de-nura as a harsh yet generative and protective attribute of the **Shekhinah**:

> A single Youth [i.e., Metatron], extending from one end of the world to the other, emerges from between her legs with sixty strokes of fire, decked in colors [the rainbow?]. This one is empowered over those below in Her four directions. [I:223b]

> It has been taught: Radiance of those sixty surrounding her [Shekhinah] is etched on the Youth, and we call these "sixty lashes of fire," in which he is clothed in the aspect of the Shekhinah, blazing judgment, as it is written … sixty warriors surrounding her. (S of S 3:7) (II:66b–67a)

The lashes also appear on plane of human action, again associated with the Shekhinah:

> As for this: The Angel of Elohim [who was going before the camp of Israel] … on one side she [Shekhinah, the pillar of cloud] was arrayed in crowns of Chesed [love] … On the second side, she was arrayed in lances of Gevurah [power], in sixty lashes of fire. [II:51b]

The pulsa de-nura is a celestial-angelic force/process/attribute related to Metatron, one that births, protects, and maintains discipline among the supernal denizens. In some readings it seems to be akin to the concept of yesurim shel ahavah [divine chastisements of love] and may even flow down to the human domain in the form of strict justice.

In modern times the pulsa de-nura has resurfaced as a title for a **curse**, though the Israeli scholar, Zion Zohar, concludes that a "ritual of pulsa de-nura" has no basis in the classical sources, but seems rather to be a borrowed term applied to a modern contrivance.[1]

1. Z. Zohar, "Pulsa De-Nura: The Innovation of Modern Magic and Ritual," *Modern Judaism* 27:1 (2007).

Pulse: The arterial pulse of the wrist has long been held to reveal the spiritual condition of a person. Tikkunei ha-Zohar identifies ten pulse patterns and their

spiritual implications. **Chayyim Vital** describes in detail how to use a pulse in performing an **exorcism**:[1]

1. Chajes, *Between Worlds*, 75–76, 213 n. 71.

Punishing Angels: In keeping with Jewish monotheism, the spirits that oversee **Gehenna** are rarely characterized as **demons**. Rather, Jewish texts assume that hell, like **heaven**, is completely under divine control. This being the case, the numinous creatures that operate Gehenna are in fact angels. These angels execute a near infinite variety of horrific punishments upon the **souls** of the wayward. These include being hurled across the universe, being flogged with rods of burning coals, flaying, dismemberment, and a host of other vividly unpleasant experiences. Different angels oversee the punishment of different classes of people, with the worst being reserved for the few wholly unredeemable wicked souls (MG; SGE).

Purity or Purification: (טהור). While **ritual** purification is a regular feature of traditional Jewish observance, purity also plays a prominent role in Jewish **mysticism** and magic. Some sort of purification is usually required before performing these acts: a mystical **ascension**, making an **amulets**, or **summoning**. Most specifications of magical purification are modeled on the purification rites required of the Israelites before they received the **Torah** at **Mount Sinai** (Ex. 19) and on the priestly purity system of the ancient **Temple**. Thus, in the **Sword Of Moses.**, a Hebrew manual for angel summoning, we read:

> If you wish to use this Sword … the man who decides to use it must first free himself three days earlier from accidental pollution and from everything unclean, eat and drink [but] once every evening, and must eat the bread from a pure man or wash his hands first in salt and drink only water … on the first day when you withdraw [from potential pollutants] bathe [in a mikvah] once and no more, pray three times daily, and after each prayer recite this blessing …

The most common elements of such purification instructions are: immersion in a mikvah (sometimes with accompanying **incantations** and reciting **secret names of God**) or a river (both **Jacob** and **Ezekiel** had encounters with God at a riverside), **fasting**, **prayer**, abstaining from **sex**, and withdrawal from normal activities and human contact. Having a **nocturnal emission** will require one to begin the period of purification over again. Fasting or reducing the kinds of

foods one eats also makes it easier to move in divine realms and/or deal with divine beings, for it makes you less human and more angelic (angels don't eat).[1] In Hechalot Rabbati, it is recommended that one also abstain from smelly food because angels can distinguish a human in their midst by the smell.[2]

Part of purification also involves donning clean clothes. When one is purifying oneself in preparation of performing a theurgic **ritual**, the clothing worn is usually required to be white (Hechalot Rabbati). *SEE* PRIESTHOOD AND PRIEST; TAHARAH.

1. Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 119–60.
2. M. Swartz, "The Book of the Great Name," 340–47.

Purple: *SEE* COLOR.

Psychopomp: Many spiritual traditions have an entity, a spirit, deity, **angel**, or righteous **ancestor**, whose responsibility is to escort newly-deceased **souls** to the afterlife. This creature is known as a psychopomp, from the Greek, meaning the "guide of souls." The role is not to judge the deceased, but simply provide safe passage. In Greek mythology, this is usually Hermes. In Egyptian **myth**, Anubis. In **Christianity**, it is St. Peter.

Judaism has this concept also. But in keeping with the doctrinal **chaos** that reigns in other aspects of Judaism, there is no firm agreement on the identity of the psychopomp. There is Lailah, the angel of **conception** who not only brings souls into this world, but then returns to them at the end of life. When the soul recognizes the angel, then Lailah takes it on to the next stage of its journey:

> When a man's time to die comes, the same angel [who brought him into the world] appears to him and asks, "Do you recognize me?" The man answers "Yes …" (Tanh. Pekudei 3)

Another tradition assigns the role to **Abraham**. The beloved ancestor awaits wayfaring souls, though not in the place you would expect:

> As he sat in the tent door in the heat (Gen. 18:2) … Rav Levi said, in the World to Come, Abraham will sit at the entrance of Gehenna and permit no circumcised child of Israel to descend there … (Gen. R. 48:8)

Finally, there is **Elijah**. Some traditions place Elijah at the scene of the **resurrection** of the dead. But he also greets the souls of those entering their everlasting reward:

> The good way has two byways, one of righteousness, the other of **love**, and Elijah, may he be remembered for good, is placed exactly between these two

ways. When a man comes to enter, Elijah, may he be remembered for good, cries aloud concerning him, saying, Open you gates, that the righteous nation which keeps truth may enter it … (Isa. 24:2) (Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 15)

[contents]

Q



Qabbalah: While this is a linguistically reasonable way to transliterate "**Kabbalah**," this spelling has become associated with Christian and Western Spiritualist/Occultist offshoots of Jewish **mysticism** that strip those teachings of their specifically Jewish/rabbinic content and attempt to fuse them with Christian doctrine and non-Jewish esoteric traditions, such as Hermeticism and Tarot. For this reason, it is useful to maintain a distinction between Jewish "kabbalah" and non-Jewish "Qabbalah."

Qalir, Eleazar: Jewish liturgist (6th–7th century, Levant?). His intricate piyutim (liturgical poems) wove Jewish mythic and fabulous themes into Jewish worship.

Queen of Demons: *SEE* LILITH.

Queen of Sheba: The mysterious figure of the Queen who comes to test the wisdom of **Solomon** (1 Kings 10:13) truly captured the Jewish imagination. In most early stories, she is a figure of exotic sexuality and intellectual acumen who tests Solomon with a variety of cunning puzzles and riddles (*Mid. Mish.* 1:1). In later Jewish literature, she comes to be regarded as a **demon**, a **succubus** that seduces men, even weds them, in order to lead them to their eventual ruin. Medieval **Midrash** regard “The Queen of Sheba” to be a moniker for **Lilith**.

Queens, the Four Demon: They are **Lilith**, **Igrat**, Malkat, and Naaman.

Qumran: (קומרן). A mysterious ancient habitation along the Dead Sea that is the closest ruin to the **caves** that contained the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. Archaeologists believe the DSS were the library of Qumran, but still argue over fundamental questions, such as whether the site was a communal center for the Essenes or a personal retreat for a wealthy Jerusalemite. This location has bequeathed scholars some of the earliest post-biblical mythic, mystical, and magical Hebrew texts known (4Q510–511; Q560; 11Q11).

Qumrin Tehirin: (קומרין טהירין). Night **demons** who interfere with the efforts of the **soul** to commune with the **Godhead** (Zohar I:83a).

QYNWLWGYH: (קינולוגיה). This word, sometimes abbreviated קינ״, frequently appears in medieval Jewish magical formulae. Taken to be nomina barbara, it is, in fact, the Greek word koinologia (“conventional words”) transliterated into the Hebrew alef-bet. In its original context of Greek **incantations**, it is an instruction to the adept to extemporize, to improvise or customize, the **language** of the spell. The **Hebrew** and Aramaic copyists failed to render it as an instruction, and over time it was simply preserved as a voce magica, a word of power.[1]

1. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 282–283.

R

Ra'aya Meheimna: "Faithful shepherd." A subsection of the **Zohar** devoted to the mystical rationales for the divine **commandments**.

Raba bar Joseph (Rava): Talmudic Sage, demonologist, and theurgist (ca. 4th century). He believed fervently in the paranormal power of the **Righteous**. According to the **Talmud**, he created a **golem**. He first did this with the help of Rabbi Zeira. On the second occasion, Zeira disapproved of his actions and destroyed Raba's golem:

> Raba stated: If they wish, the righteous could create a world. Raba created a man and he sent it to Rabi Zeira. Rabi Zeira spoke with it and it did not respond. Rabi Zeira then stated, "You are created by my colleague, return to your dust." (Sanh. 65b)

He saw the workings of **demons** in all kinds of human misery (Ber. 6a). He was also a master of **dream** interpretation (Ber. 56a–56b; Chul. 133a). Like other famous sages, his death was marked by paranormal events (M.K. 28a).

Rabbah bar bar Channah: Storyteller (ca. 3rd century). A kind of Jewish Baron Munchausen, Bar Channah told tall tales of his travels, mostly **sea** journeys that are filled with **demons** , fantastic feats, mysterious locales (Ber. 53b; Zev. 113b), and giant **animals**:

> Rabbah b. Bar Hana further stated: I saw a frog the size of the Fort of Hagronia. (What is the size of the Fort of Hagronia?—Sixty houses.) There came a snake and swallowed the frog. Then came a raven and swallowed the snake, and perched on a tree. Imagine how strong was the tree. R. Papa b. Samuel said: Had I not been there I would not have believed it.
>
> Rabbah b. Bar Hana further stated: Once we were traveling on board a ship and saw a fish in whose nostrils a parasite had entered. Thereupon, the water cast up the fish and threw it upon the shore. Sixty towns were destroyed thereby, sixty towns ate therefrom, and sixty towns salted [the remnants] thereof, and from one of its eyeballs three hundred kegs of oil were filled. On returning after twelve calendar months we saw that they were cutting rafters from its skeleton and proceeding to rebuild those towns.
>
> Rabbah b. Bar Hana further stated: Once we were traveling on board a ship and saw a fish whose back was covered with sand out of which grew grass. Thinking it was dry land we went up and baked, and cooked, upon its back.

When, however, its back was heated it turned, and had not the ship been nearby we should have been drowned.

Rabbah b. Bar Hana further stated: We traveled once on board a ship. And the ship sailed between one fin of the fish and the other for three days and three nights; it [was swimming] upwards and we [were floating] downwards. And if you think the ship did not sail fast enough, R. Dimi, when he came, stated that it covered sixty parasangs in the time it takes to warm a kettle of water. When a horseman shot an arrow [the ship] outstripped it. And R. Ashi said: That was one of the small sea monsters which have [only] two fins … (B.B. 73a–73b)

He once heard the voice of Korach emanating from the place where the **Earth** swallowed him up (Yoma 39b; *EY* ad loc).

Rabbah bar Nachmani: Talmudic Sage (ca. 3rd–4th century). His **Death** was the occasion for a series of paranormal events:

A royal officer was sent [to arrest him] him … He was then brought before him, and he led him into a chamber and locked the door upon him [to keep him there as a prisoner]. But he [Rabbah] prayed, whereupon the wall fell down, and he fled to Agama; there he sat upon the trunk of a [fallen] palm and studied. Now, they were disputing in the Heavenly Academy thus: If the bright spot preceded the white hair, he is unclean; if the reverse, he is clean. If [the order is] in doubt—the Blessed Holy One ruled, He is clean; whilst the entire Heavenly Academy maintained, He is unclean. Who shall decide it? said they—Rabbah b. Nahmani [i.e., it's time for him to die and join us] … and angel was sent for him, but the Angel of Death could not approach him, because he did not interrupt his studies [even for a moment]. In the meantime, a wind blew and caused a rustling in the bushes [distracting him from his studies and the Angel claimed him] … As he was dying, he exclaimed, "Clean, clean!" [agreeing with God in the dispute], when a Heavenly Voice cried out, "Happy art thou, O Rabbah b. Nahmani, whose body is pure and whose soul had departed in purity!" A missive fell from Heaven in Pumbeditha, "Rabbah b. Nahmani has been summoned by the Heavenly Academy." So Abaye and Raba and all the scholars went forth to attend on him [at his burial] … and then there fell [another] a missive from Heaven, "Return in peace to your homes." On the day that he died a hurricane lifted an Arab who was riding a camel, and transported him from one bank of the

River Papa to the other. “What does this portend?” he exclaimed. “Rabbah b. Nahmani has died,” he was told. (B.M. 86a; also see Nega. 4:11)

Rabbah ben Abuha: Talmudic Sage (ca. 3rd century). After encountering **Elijah**, he ascended to the **Garden of Eden** while still alive. When he returned to **Earth**, all of his clothing bore the fragrance of Eden, a scent so enchanting that he made a fortune by selling his **garments** (B.M. 114a–b).

Rabbi and Sage: (רבי/Rabbi, also Rav; Rov; Chacham). “Master/Teacher/Wise [one].” The office of the rabbinate is not a biblical institution, though it has its prototype in the biblical figure of the sage. The title begins being used in the first centuries of the Common Era. The first Rabbis (or “Sages” with a capital “S,” also known as Chazal) envisioned their authority as analogous to that of the biblical shofet (judge). As such, the Talmudic Sages believed they had the biblical authority to lead the people, wage war, interpret and adjudicate the **commandments** found in the **Torah**, and administer all its sanctions, including capital punishment. This was based on the belief that the divinely established system of transmitting authority through s’michah, “laying of hands/ordination,” continued uninterrupted from **Moses** and **Joshua** (Deut. 34:9; M. Avot 1:1) until their own day. Since around the 3rd century CE, the Sages lost confidence in the reliability of this chain of transmission and all rabbis ordained since that time have been regarded as having far less authority.

Rachamim: (רחמים). “Compassion.” Another title for the sefirah of Tiferet. *SEE* SEFIROT.

Rachel: One of the four **Matriarchs** of the Jewish people, she was the beloved second wife of **Jacob** and mother of **Joseph** and Benjamin. In the **Bible**, Rachel’s magical activities are limited to the use of mandrake as a fertility enhancer (Gen. 30). She stole the terafim of her father, Laban. The Rabbis conclude her death shortly after that incident was punishment for dabbling with these **idols** (Gen. R. 74:5, 74:9; PdRE 36).

Because of her own struggle with barrenness, after her death Rachel came to be the spiritual intercessor of choice for Jewish women having trouble with **childbirth**. Her tomb outside of Bethlehem is a popular destination for Jewish pilgrims. Sometimes a **red** cord will be unwound around the shrine as part of the supplications for Rachel’s **intercession**.[1] *SEE* ANCESTORS; FERTILITY; PATRIARCHS AND MATRIARCHS

1. Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 13, 1486–90.

Rachel Aberlin ha-Ashkenazit: Visionary and oneiromancer (Greco-Turkish, ca. 16th century). **Chayyim Vital** admired her sensitivity to paranormal apparitions, **angels**, and **ghost** (Sefer ha-Hezyonot).

Ragshiel: (רגשאל). The **angel** of **dreams**, he is sometimes equated with the Baal ha-Chalom/Sar ha-Chalom. He can be summoned to answer dream questions (Synopse #502–07). *SEE* DIVINATION; INCUBATION; MERKAVAH.

Rahab: The prostitute living in Jericho who assisted **Joshua** and the Israelite spies prior to their siege of the city (book of Joshua). She was so beautiful the mere mention of her name inflamed men's desire (Meg. 14b– 15a). After the siege, she converted to Judaism and married Joshua. **priests** and prophets, including, **Ezekiel**, **Jeremiah**, and Huldah, were descended from her (Sifrei Num. 78; Tan. 5b; Deut. R. 2:19; Yalkut Josh. 10).

Rahatiel: (רהטיאל). "Channel of God." **Angel** who governs the course of the stars and circles the **Throne of Glory** (Zohar III:3a).

Rahav: (רהב). A cosmic **sea** monster first mentioned in the biblical book of Isaiah (51:9; Ps. 89:10; Job 26:12). **Talmud** called him the Prince of the Sea, echoing the Canaanite name for their sea God, "Prince River." God slew him when he refused to help in creating the **Earth**. The oceans conceal the lethal stink of his carcass, which is why sea water smells so strange (B.B. 74b; Tan.10a). Rahav may be an alternative name for **Leviathan**, though some sources treat them as two different entities.

Rain: (גשם). "Greater is the falling of rain than the giving of **Torah**, for the giving of Torah was a joy to Israel, but the falling of rain is a joy for all the world" (Mid. Teh**.** 117:1). A critical force in the life of the world, rain is the focus of many Jewish myths, **prayers**, and theurgic **rituals**. According to the **Bible**, God is the sender of rain and may withhold it as punishment for **idolatry**, bloodshed, and lawlessness (Deut. 11). Rain is also an **omen** of divine favor. For example, the Sages interpret rain at a funeral as a sign of the righteousness of the deceased (Sanh. 47a).

An entire tractate of the **Talmud**, Ta'anit**,** is effectively dedicated to the topic of rain, and includes many miraculous tales (9a–9b, 23a–b, 25a). One of the powers of a **Righteous** person is to intercede with God to make it rain. The Rabbis not only mandated supplication prayers for rain, they would impose fasts in time of drought and/or appeal to rainmakers, like Choni ha-Ma'agel, to

intervene with God (Tan. 23a). Later figures, such as the Baal Shem Tov, also were remembered as wondrous rainmakers (*ShB* 21).

According to the mystics, rain is the masculine principle in the **fertility** cycle of the **Earth**, the “husband of the earth” (Tan. 6b); it must mix with the feminine force of subterranean waters and dew in order for the lower worlds to fructify and the ground to yield its bounty (Tan. 10a). Together they symbolize the proper union of male and female principles at work (Zohar I:17b, 29b; Zohar II:28b).[1] The water libation ritual performed on **Sukkot** is a theurgic ceremony meant to activate this fusion (Tan. 25b; *Suk*. 49a). *SEE* DEW; WATER.

1. Green, *Guide to the Zohar*, 67.

Rainbow: (קשת). According to Genesis, after **the Flood**, God created the rainbow as a promise to the descendants of **Noah** to never again reverse the creative order (Gen. 9). The rainbow is therefore a symbol of God’s forgiveness and reconciliation with **Creation**.

The Sages regarded a rainbow to be a miraculous sign rather than a natural phenomenon. **Hechalot** literature suggests the earthly rainbow is a reflection of a supernal rainbow in **heaven** (III Enoch 22). In the **Zohar**, a rainbow is a form of the divine **glory** and is an emanation of either **Malchut** or **Yesod**. Other mystical sources declare all the **colors** of the **sefirot** are expressed in the rainbow. **Moses** wore the “garments” of a rainbow in order to shield himself during his encounter with God on **Sinai**(Zohar II:99a). **Elijah** tests the righteousness of individuals by asking if they have ever seen a rainbow. Since the truly **Righteous** person sustains the world on his or her own merit, such a person never sees one. This is because it is a reminder of God’s graciousness toward those of us who otherwise don’t merit redemption (Ket. 77b; Zohar II:15a). A particularly splendid rainbow will herald the coming of the **Messiah** (SCh 1445; Bachya commenting on Gen. 9:13).

Rakia: (רקיע). “Firmament.” One of the **seven heavens**, Rakia contains all the celestial luminaries, the **sun**, the **moon,** the **stars,** and constellations (Pes. 94a–b; Chag. 12b–13a).

Ram: (איל/**Iel**). A symbol of both power and forgiveness, rams were a favored sacrificial offering in the **Temple**. A ram’s **horns** is the type most commonly used to make a shofar, and its hide is used to make **Torah** scrolls and tefillin.

The ram that **Abraham** slaughtered in place of his son Isaac (Gen. 22) was a miraculous creature, made by God even before the creation of the world. From

this ram were made the strings of David's harp, the loincloth of **Elijah**, the shofar that sounded at **Mount Sinai**, as well as the shofar that will be sounded at the return of the exiled tribes of Israel in the Messianic Era (PdRE 31; R.H. 16a; Eccl. R. 10:8).

A ram's head is sometimes used as the centerpiece of the rosh ha-Shanah festive meals, in order to invoke good luck for the coming year. *SEE* ANIMALS; NEW YEAR.; SACRIFICE.

Ransom: (פדיון/Pidyon). The spiritual ransoming of **souls** is an ancient practice. One of the oldest forms of spiritual ransom in Judaism is the custom of Pidyon ha-Ben, ransom of the firstborn son. Since all that "opens the womb" belongs first to God, the firstborn male in every Jewish family must be "redeemed" in a ceremony where the father makes a **charity** (tzedakah) donation in the presence of a priest to reclaim the child for himself.

Based on the biblical adage "Charity saves from death" (Prov. 10:2), the giving of tzedakah to aid the ill sometimes takes on a magical dimension. Specifically, ransoming ceremonies can be performed on behalf of the sick and dying. Often such protective charity involves donating money in symbolically significant amounts (for example, twenty-six, equal to the numeric value of the **Tetragrammaton**). Aside from money donations, the ill person's clothing was often given away, not only to placate numinous forces, but with the additional hope that it would confuse the **Angels of Death**.

There also exist Kabbalistic rituals (reciting the **names of God**, or symbolically arranging the donation) to accompany such acts, which are deemed necessary for the ransom to be efficacious.[1]

1. Klein, *A Time to Be Born*, 107–8, 147.

Raphael: (רפאל). "Healing of God." One of the four princely **angels** that attends upon the west (rear) of the **Throne of Glory** (Num. R. 2:10). He wears a plate with God's name upon it (PR 108b). Raphael is also a warrior angel, having battled against the fallen angels, then casting them into the netherworld (I Enoch 10). Raphael can also directly assist righteous mortals, as he does when he assists the boy Tobiah when he battles a **demon** (Tobit 3–6). Despite his name, he is only occasionally linked to **healing**. **Midrash** identifies him as one of the three angels that visited **Abraham** after his self-circumcision (Gen. 18; Yoma 37a; BhM 86). Raphael escorts the Shekhinah (Zohar I:18b). He is one of the four **guardian angels** who protect a sleeping person (Siddur, "Sh'ma al ha-Mitah").

Raphael Anav, the Daughter of: This medium, whose name was not preserved, was frequently possessed by **angels** and the spirits of dead sages. Through her they revealed many **secret sins** of the Jewish community of Damascus and so brought many to repentance (Sefer ha-Hezyonot 22–24).

RaSHI: (רשי). Bible and **Talmud** commentator (French, ca. 11th century). RaSHI is an acronym for R**a**bbi **Sh**imon ben **Y**itzchak. While RaSHI's writings reveal a familiarity with **Hechalot** literature and **Sefer Yetzirah** , only a very few esoteric references appear in his writings, mostly regarding angels. A few occult traditions exist surrounding the person of RaSHI, mostly in tales that the deceased sage appeared to his disciples in **dream**s to reveal secrets of the **Torah**.[1]

1. Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*, 67, 144–45, 160n.

Rava: *SEE* RABA BAR JOSEPH

Raven: (עורב). This unclean bird is a bearer of bad **omens**. For this reason the roof of the **Temple** in **Jerusalem** was covered with spikes to keep ravens away. Rabbah bar Channah claims to have seen a giant raven, a **bird** bigger than the "fort of Hagronia" (B.B. 73b; EY).

Raz/Razim: (רז). "Secret/secrets." This term refers to occult knowledge in general, but the construction of **amulets** in particular. In fact, as evidenced by the texts of some **incantation bowls**, the word is sometimes used as a synonym for "amulet" or "protective charm." *SEE* RAZIM, SEFER HA-

Raza de-Mehemenuta: "Secret of Faith." "The lower seven **sefirot** are collectively known by this term.

Raza ha-Razim: "Mystery of Mysteries." A section of the **Zohar** partly devoted to **divination**, especially **physiognomy**.

Raziel: (רזיאל). "Secret of God." An **angel** of revelation, he provided a book, some say inscribed on sapphire, to the primordial couple (Zohar I:55a). The magical manual Sefer Raziel ha-Malach claims this as its origins.

Raziel bears the words of mortals to **heaven** and, hearing what is said from behind the celestial curtain, brings decrees back to **Earth** (Targum Kohelet 10:20). He is at times identified with the angel Galitzur (Malachei Elyon 180). He shields the **guardian angels** from the fiery breath of the **Chayyot** as they stand arrayed around the **Throne of Glory** (BhM 1:58–61). In the Zoharic

literature, Raziel seems to personify the sefirot of Tiferet (Zohar Hadash 99:3). *SEE* RAZIM, SEFER HA-.

Raziel, Sefer: An influential book of **sorcery**. Tradition credits it with being given to **Adam** by the angel **Raziel**. Heavily indebted to Greek magical papyri, the title itself is mentioned in another magical work of late antiquity, the **Sword Of Moses.**. Still, critical historians consider *Sefer Raziel* a medieval work—though sections of it are no doubt older—probably having origins among the Jews of Rhineland, for citations from it begin to appear only in the 13th century.[1] The likely compiler of the medieval version is **Eleazar of Worms**. It draws heavily on earlier works, **Sefer Yetzirah** and **Sefer ha-Razim**. There are multiple manuscript versions, containing up to seven tractates.



Page of Sefer Raziel with amulet

The printed version of *Sefer Raziel*, like the **Torah**, is divided into five books, some of it in the form of a mystical **Midrash** on **Creation**. It features an elaborate **angelology**, magical uses of the **zodiac**, **gematria**, the **names of God**, protective spells, and instructions on how to write **amulets**>.

1. Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 13, 1592.

Razim, Sefer ha-: “The Book of Secrets” or “The Book of Amulets.” A Jewish magical manual that has circulated in a number of fragmentary versions, including a manuscript found among the documents of the Cairo Geniza. Other parts have been recovered and from them a larger text reconstructed. Elements of the book were published in 1701 as part of Sefer **Raziel**.[1]

The book attests that it was revealed to **Noah** by the angel Raziel. The book then passed through the generations of worthies until it became **Solomon's** most prized book of **magic**. Other sources credit Solomon with its authorship.

The book is mostly focused on astral magic, the power that can be derived from planetary forces and their associated **angels**. It is divided into seven sections, mirroring the seven days of **Creation** and the **seven heavens**. It describes in great detail the host of heaven, the angelic commanders, and their powers. It also delineates the twelve months, their **zodiacs**, governing angels, and the like. It is particularly interested in the power of the **sun** as a numinous source of revelation.

It also provides a menu of useful **incantations**. These spells are very characteristic of Greek magical papyri texts of late antiquity—they feature repetitions, reversed language, foreign and nonsense words, and names.

More surprising for a Hebrew book is the number of references to Greek Gods, such as Helios, Hermes, and Aphrodite. Disregarding the stricter biblical and rabbinic attitudes toward **idols**, the approach of **Sefer ha-Razim** seems to be to simply demote these Pagan Gods to another class of angels subordinate to the God of Israel.

Like the **Hechalot** literature, Sefer ha-Razim emphasizes the need for performing all deeds in a state of strict ritual and spiritual **purity**. But unlike the Hechalot texts, Sefer ha-Razim includes magical practices that these other texts eschew, such as the use of **ritual** objects (**lamps**, knives) and animal **sacrifices**. There is also virtually no use of biblical verses of power such as is seen in many other Hebrew magical manuals, nor are any rabbinic figures mentioned. All of this suggests that the author of **Sefer ha-Razim**, though Hebrew literate, was perhaps marginal to, or marginalized from, the Judaism of his time. *SEE* ASTROLOGY; SORCERY.

1. M. Morgan, *Sepher ha-Razim* (Bloomington, IN: Scholars Press, 1983), Introduction; also see Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, 85–108.

Rebbe: (רבי). The charismatic leader of a Chasidic community, alternately called Tzadik, “Righteous One.” Rebbes are usually, though not always, ordained rabbis. Being a rebbe is often a hereditary position, for after a beloved rebbe dies, his Chasids will look first to immediate relatives for a replacement. This convention is naturally subject to abuse and, like kings selected by heredity, sometimes yields uneven leadership. Rebbes are often credited with miraculous powers such as precognition, metoposcopy, teleportation, and **healing** (See all of ShB). *SEE* CHASIDISM; RIGHTEOUS, THE; TZADIK.

Rebecca: Wife of **Isaac** and **Matriarch** of the Jewish people. God revealed to **Abraham** that his son's wife had been born while Isaac was still bound for **sacrifice** (Gen. R. 57:1). Two angels brought Rebecca and **Eliezer**, the servant seeking a wife for Isaac, together (Gen. R. 59:10). When she would go to the well for **water**, the water would rise to meet her (Gen. R. 60:5). Rebecca agreed to go to marry Isaac sight unseen because she recognized it was her destiny (PdRE 16). Rebecca's father, Laban, attempted to **poison** the messenger, but an **angel** thwarted him (Sechel Tov [Buber]; Gen. 24:33). God miraculously shortened the route she traveled to meet Isaac (PdRE 16) and miraculously caused her to grow a womb, which she lacked, so she could bear children (Gen. R. 63:5).

Red: (אדום). In the **Bible**, red is a symbol of life and power (Gen. 38:28). The presence of **blood** on the lintels of Israelite houses averted the **Angel of Death**during the tenth **plague**. In the ancient **Temple**, a scarlet cord was hung up on **Yom Kippur** and its miraculous change to white signaled that the nation had been forgiven its **sins**. According to the book of Numbers, one overcomes the ritual impurity of contact with a dead **Body** by being sprinkled with the **ashes** of a red heifer burned with cedar wood, a crimson compound, and hyssop (Num. 19:2–10). A barren woman will wrap a red cord around the tomb of **Rachel** as a **ritual** to restore her **fertility**. This cord is then cut into strands and tied to cribs, children, or the sick as a protective **amulet**.[1]

Red also has antidemonic properties. As a result, there are a number of amulets that are made incorporating red materials: thread, coral beads, or henna. In sefirotic theosophy, red is the color of Gevurah. As part of the recent enthusiasm for **Kabbalah** among celebrities, many people have adopted the custom of wearing a red thread bracelet to protect against the **evil eye**. *SEE* COLOR.

1. J. Goldin, *Studies in Midrash and Related Literature* (Philadelphia, PA: JPS, 1988) 118; also see Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 13, 1590.

Reed Sea: (ים סוף/Yam Suf). Long mistranslated in Western tradition as the "Red Sea," the parting of the Reed Sea is a paradigmatic **miracle** of salvation in the Hebrew Scriptures, a feat performed through the agency of the greatest of all prophets, **Moses** (Ex. 14). The fact that both Joshua and **Elijah** performed later similar miracles with the Jordan River signifies their special status in the eyes of the biblical authors.

According to one **Midrash**, God did not actually part the waters; instead **Mount Sinai** was transported to the spot and the people crossed over on its crest

(Gen. R. 55:8).

At the moment of the parting, a great apocalyptic revelation occurred, witnessed by all **Israel** (MdRI BeShallach), the **glory** of God becoming fully manifest. Others teach the sea actually parted into twelve pathways, one for each tribe (PdRE 42).

Re'em: (ראם). A mythic giant ox like beast with **horns** (Ps. 22:22). It is an untamed creature of great agility and strength. It is so big that its horns touch the clouds and its droppings are capable of damming the river Jordan (Secher Tov 102; Yalkut II:688). Asmodeus, the king of **demons** , states it is a type of demon (Git. 68b). Created on the sixth day, there are only two re'ems at a time; one dwells in the furthermost west, the other in the east. After mating once in seventy years, the female kills the male. The next pair of re'ems gestates in the female for a minimum of twelve years. The female dies while giving birth. **Noah** preserved them by bringing the two calves on board when they were still small enough to fit inside the vessel. Another legend claims that the adult re'ems swam the entire time, tied to the back of the Ark (Zev. 113b). King **David** also had a misadventure in his youth by inadvertently mistaking a re'em for a mountain and climbing on it (Mid.Teh. 22:28; LOTJ 4:83). In medieval writings, the re'em is conflated with the unicorn **myth**. SEE ANIMALS; BEHEMOTH.

Refuot, Sefer: "The Book of Cures." A book mentioned in the **Bible**. King Hezekiah destroyed it, apparently as part of his campaign to snuff out Pagan practices (2 Kings 20). *SEE* HEALING .

Reina, Joseph Della: Kabbalist and sorcerer (Spanish, ca. 15th century). Della Reina is most famous for attempting, with the help of ten adepts, to summon and enslave the **demon** princes **Samael** and Ammon of No in order to have them help bring the Messiah. The attempt went awry because Della Reina introduced an alien magical practice into the **ritual**. Consequently he suffered a most supernatural punishment when the **demons** broke their bonds and escaped.[1] Della Reina may also be the author of the magico-Kabbalistic Sefer ha-Meshiv. *SEE* MESSIAH; SUMMONING.

1. M. Idel, "The Story of Rabbi Joseph Della Reina," **Sefunot:** *Studies and Texts on the History of the Jewish Community in Safed* (1963).

Reincarnation: (גלגול/**Gilgul**). The belief that a **soul** migrates from one **Body** to another is an occult Kabbalistic teaching. A cryptic reference to the transfer of souls first appears in the **Talmud**, when an interpretation is offered to **Daniel**:

> A thousand thousands of angels serve Him, and a myriad of myriads rise before Him (Dan. 7:10) … These [the myriads] are the 974 generations that were uprooted from being created before the creation of the [our] world. God spread them out in each ensuing generation. They are the most brazen people in each generation. (Chag. 14a)

The rationalist Sa'adia Gaon (10th century) is the first to mention that some Jews believe in reincarnation, but then ridicules the idea (Sefer Emunah v'Da'at 6) as absurd. This suggests that the concept had some occult existence in the Jewish world for some time prior to Sa'adia, but we cannot say for how long with any certainty. The first Jewish text that explicitly argues for gilgul appears in the Bahir, a mystical text of the late 12th century, offers the "parable of the **garments**" and the "parable of the vineyard":

> What is [the meaning of] Generation to Generation (Psalm 164:10)? Rabbi Papas said, a generation goes and a generation comes (Ecc. 1:4). Rabbi Akiba said, a generation came that already came. A parable. To what can this be compared? To a king who had servants and as much as he could he dressed them in garments of silk and embroidery. The grain spoiled [they ruined the things in their charge, and they so ruined their garments]. So he pushed them from him and sent them away. He took their garments, so they left them. [The king] took the garments and cleaned them well until not a stain remained. He placed them near Him for an appointed time. He acquired other servants, and dressed them in the same garments. Though he did not know if they were any good [either], they were worthy of garments that already existed and had been worn by others before them … (121/122)
>
> Why does the wicked man prosper and the righteous suffer? [R. Rahmai replied] Because this righteous man was once a wicked man in the past, and is now being punished … He said to them: Go and see! A parable: What is the matter like? It is like a man who planted a vineyard in his garden, and he hoped it would grow grapes, but it grew wild grapes. He saw that his planting did not succeed, so he cut down the vineyard, tore it out, and cleaned the good grapes from the wild ones, and planted it a second time. When he saw that that did not succeed, he tore it down and planted after he had cleaned it. When he saw that [the third planting] was not successful, he tore it out and [re]planted it. And how many times? Until the thousandth generation, as it is written, "The davar [literally "the thing," i.e., the soul] He gave to a thousandth generation" (Ps. 105:8). And that is to say: 974 generations were

> missing (Chag. 13b–14a), so the Holy Blessed One arose and planted them in every generation. (Bahir 195)

Within a century, it was being widely mentioned in Kabbalistic literature. It gets serious elaboration in the 16th-century book, Galya Raza. **Chayyim Vital** followed shortly thereafter with the highly influential books Sefer ha-Gilgulim and Sha’ar ha-Gilgulim. Though the idea only surfaces in the Middle Ages, these sources find additional references to it in the **Bible** itself (specifically Job 33:29–30), but also in the custom of levirate marriage. The fundamental assumption underpinning reincarnation is that each soul must properly fulfill every mitzvah and will undergo transmigration until that task is complete. Transgressions and failure to perform a commandment retard the soul’s progress.[1] More and more readers found the doctrine embedded in the **Bible**. The Vilna Gaon, for example, reads the entire book of Jonah as an allegory for the transmigration of the soul:

> The name “Yonah,” which means “Dove,” is conventional to refer to the human soul. The soul is called “Ben Amattai,” “Son of the Truth,” as the soul is a child of God, whose seal is Truth. God selected this soul, and sent it to our world with a mission of informing the world, [which is] Nineveh, why we are here. He told the soul to go to the “large city,” which is a reference to Earth, and tell people that they are here to perform good rather than evil. The soul refused, though, and instead became distracted by desire … Yonah found a boat, which is a body, and he descended into the boat and embarked on a trip to sate his desires. The sea is this world, and it is often used thus in the **Talmud** (Tam. 32a). Storms begin, and the boat is threatened with destruction. The sailors, [representing] a person’s organs, are unable to control the boat. The sailors go through the motions of prayer, but Yonah is ready to die. The organs call to the soul, as the only entity capable of effecting change; they ask what its mission is, but the soul is beyond caring for this world at that point. The soul is thrown into the sea, and dies. The fish, symbolizing the grave, swallows Yonah. Yonah is in the fish for three days; [traditionally, the soul is understood to hover by the body for three days]. Yonah then calls out to God to bring it close to Him. Yonah is then regurgitated on to dry land—the Garden of Eden. This is not the end for the soul; he is reincarnated, and given his mission anew. This time he agrees to go to Nineveh [the world] and reproaches those who have transgressed. He carries out his work in Nineveh, and the people listen, and God forgives them.[2]

The specific metaphysics of reincarnation have varied widely from teacher to teacher. Unlike other schools of reincarnation, the Bahir assumes that human **souls** may only transmigrate to other humans. Later works, especially Chasidic writings, hold that souls may pass between human, animal, and even inanimate bodies (ShB 108). Like in Hinduism, reincarnation in a nonhuman life reflects a kind of punishment, but reincarnation is generally viewed positively, as multiple opportunities to help others and acquire merit for the self.[3]

For those who accept that souls can transmigrate into animals, plants, and the **foods** that are made from them, it follows that one must take care to treat every morsel according to the prescriptions of tradition, for doing so helps liberate that soul to continue its journey (Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim, Mavo; Kav ha-Yashar 1).

Exactly how reincarnation dovetails with the concept of **Gehenna** has been much discussed. Kabbalists believe that the soul is polypsychic and different aspects of the triad soul (nishama, ruach, and nefesh) have separate paths in the afterlife. This model has the virtue of encompassing all other afterlife scenarios (**resurrection** or eternal life) found in tradition.

The concept of the dybbuk and the ibbur are tied to this aspect of reincarnation. The Tanya offers gilgul as an explanation for conversion to Judaism: all converts are really lost Jewish souls trapped in gentile bodies who have now found their way back to Torah.

The number of possible reincarnations for a soul could be as few as three (based on the Job verses cited above) or as many as a thousand. All souls, but especially a virtuous soul, can subdivide and occupy multiple bodies. Based on the account found in Exodus, which declares that six hundred thousand "souls" stood at Sinai, there exists the belief that there are only six hundred thousand "root" souls in Israel. These have subsequently split, spread out, and reunited in millions of Jewish bodies across the generations. We can see this manifest in the ideology surrounding tzadikim ("**Righteous** individuals"). Such people possess a full soul, a soul that is close to completing its cycle of transmigrations, yet remains bound to a **Body** long enough to help lift up the other souls around it. The righteous know the **secrets** of their own and of other people's reincarnations. Such saints also have the power of **Tikkun**: they can "correct" certain errors in the transmigration of a given soul and set it on its proper course. **Exorcism** is such a reparative mechanism, benefiting both the possessed person and the dybbuk. The souls of the saintly are also transmigrated into **fish**, which is one reason why it is meritorious to consume fish on the **Sabbath**. Thus a

person can, as it were, “embody” and absorb some of the virtue of saintly souls (Sha’ar ha-Gilgulim; Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avodah, Sha’ar 7).

1. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 192.
2. Author’s translation.
3. Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 2, 77.

Reishit Chochmah: Mystical text written by Elijah de Vidas (1518–1592). It includes accounts of spirit **possession** and veridical **dreams**.

Reiyat ha-Lev: (ראית הלב). “Visions of the Heart.” The term for **visions**, more than imaginative, less than factual, that account for anthropomorphic descriptions of God. *SEE* CHERUB, THE UNIQUE.; FACE OF GOD; IMAGINATION.

Resh: (ר). The twentieth letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**. It has the vocalic value of “r” and the numeric value of two hundred. It signifies the head, wickedness, and evil.[1] *SEE* LANGUAGE.

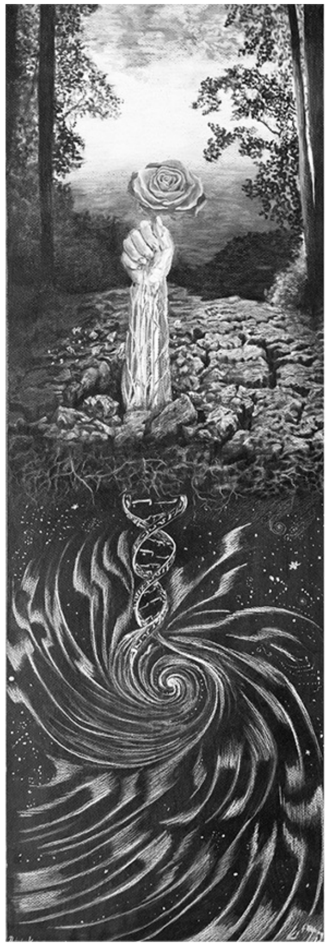
1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 199–206.

Resh Lakish: Talmudic Sage (ca. 2nd–3rd century). A reformed highwayman and gladiator who is won over to **Torah** by Rabbi Johanan, he was the **Samson** of the rabbinic period, performing great feats of strength (Git. 47a; B.M. 84a).

Reshef: “Plague.” A **demon** first mentioned in the **Bible** (Hab. 3:5).

Resurrection: (תחית המתים/T’chayyat ha-Metim). The doctrine that the dead will undergo an embodied restoration in the **World to Come**. Three narratives in the Hebrew **Bible** feature a person being brought back from the dead—1 Kings 17:17–24; 2 Kings 4:32–37; and 2 Kings 13:21. These are presented as uncanny and exceptional events, singular demonstrations of divine power. Yet by the postexilic period, the notion that all can be expected return from the grave has emerged. This concept is articulated in the latest section of Isaiah and the book of Daniel:

> Your dead men shall live, together with my dead bodies shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust; for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out its dead. (Isa. 26:19)
>
> And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to reproaches and everlasting abhorrence. (Dan. 12:2)



Resurrection of the dead by permission of artist Natalia Kadish

At some point in the second **Temple** Period, resurrection became enshrined as a central concept of the afterlife in Judaism (Siddur). The **Talmud** offers an argument that resurrection is, at least, alluded to in all three sections of the Hebrew Bible:

> From the Torah—it is written: “And Adonai said to Moses, Behold you shall sleep with your fathers; and this people will rise up …” (Deut. 31:16). From the Prophets: as it is written: “Your dead men shall live, together with my dead bodies shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust; for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out its dead.” (Isa. 26:19); from the Writings: as it is written, “And the roof of your mouth, like the best wine of my beloved, like the best wine, that goes down sweetly, causing the lips of those who are asleep to speak.”(S of S 7:9; Sanh. 90b)

Maimonides regarded it to be one of the thirteen doctrines a faithful Jew must believe in.

On **Judgment Day**, all the dead will be resurrected with the blast of a shofar and be judged for their actions in life. Those buried in the Land of **Israel** will be the first to rise from the grave (Gen. R. 74:1; Tanh. Va-yehi 3).

Those who died outside the land will have to journey there first through subterranean conduits (Ket. 111a). The **Righteous**, as well as those who have atoned for their sins through time spent in **Gehenna**, will know an afterlife in a perfected **Body**. Those who constitute the incorrigible sinners will be annihilated, body and **soul**, and their **memory** blotted out from under **heaven**. Some sources treat resurrection as an intermediate phase before the souls go on to a disembodied existence in eternity (Gen. R. 95:1; Pes. 68a; Sanh. 91b; Eccl. R. 1:4; Tanh. Vayigash; Zohar I:130b).

Eleazar of Worms suggested that the truly righteous have the power to resurrect the dead, as demonstrated by the examples of **Elijah**, Elisha, and **Ezekiel**. This power to resurrect is an autonomous power that results from the saint's own knowledge of how to manipulate the mystical power of the alphabet, especially the seventy-two-word name of God (Zohar I:7b), the same power that can be used to construct a **golem**.

Reubeni, David: Adventurer (ca. 16th century). Appearing from whereabouts unknown, Reubeni came to Italy claiming to represent a Jewish kingdom in the east and asking the Pope to assist him in a crusade against the Turks. He reportedly received a favorable hearing. His mission to Portugal was less successful and he was expelled from there, but not before triggering renewed persecutions by the Inquisition against the Portuguese "New Christian" community that had welcomed him. While in Iberia, he met Solomon Molokho, a Crypto-Jew and aspiring **Messiah**. Molokho publicly reconverted to Judaism and followed Reubeni back to Italy. Together they toured various Christian kingdoms announcing the impending end of the world. Christian authorities eventually arrested both men, and Reubeni died in prison after several years.[1]

1. Roth, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 14, 114–15.

Re'uyot Yehezkel: "Visions of Ezekiel." Re'uyot Yehezkel is one of the earliest **merkavah** texts in existence. The work enumerates the various things that **Ezekiel** saw in his **vision** of the divine **chariot** (Ezek. 1). It gives one of most detailed description of the **seven heavens** found in Jewish literature, describing all their dimensions and functions.[1]

1. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 134–41.

Reversal (Magical): (למופרע/L'mufra). The concept of symbolic analogy is fundamental to the logic of **magic**. Likewise, reversing or inverting a symbolic analogy—doing something backward—whether it be by performing a task or reading a word, frequently appears in magical literature. It is held to have the power to reverse the natural order, to undo something, or to achieve a counter-magical effect. The most infamous example in Christian circles is the "black Sabbath," in which many Christian rituals and objects are used contrary, upside-down or backward to the prescribed manner, or with a completely contradictory purpose to the "authorized" version. Common Jewish examples of magical reversal include: reciting potent biblical verses forward and then backward, changing the order of a name, or performing an act of reversal as part of a **ritual** (backing out of a room, for example). A large number of medieval **incantations** have been preserved that were written wholly or partly in reverse.[1]

1. Kern-Ulmer, "The Depiction of Magic in Rabbinic Texts," 299.

Rhabdomancy: **Divination** using sticks or rods. *SEE* BELOMANCY; LECANOMANCY; DIVINATION ROD

Riddle: (חידה/**Chidah**). Riddles and word puzzles have had a role in Jewish life since **Samson** first used them against the Philistines (Judg.). **Solomon** specifically honors them as spiritual tools and claims that the Scripture frequently speaks in riddles and enigmas (S of S R. 1.5). **gematria**, of course, is treated as an elaborate form of numeric riddles woven into the very fabric of the universe. The **Zohar** has a strong inclination toward numerical puzzles (I:32b, 72b, 77a, 151b; II:12b, 95a). Some Chasidic tales weave spiritual lessons into elaborate allegorical riddles. *SEE* PARADOX; SECRET.

Ridiya: (רידיא). "Shower." **Angel** of **rain** and the watery deeps. Ridiya summons the fall rains and the tellurian waters at **Sukkot** (RaSHI comment on Tan. 25b).

Righteous, the: (צדיקים/Tzadikim, also Kedoshim; Amudat ha-Olam). While Judaism has no notion of "Saints" in the sense that it is used in Roman Catholicism, Judaism definitely recognizes "saints" (with a small "s"). These are exceptionally pure and righteous individuals.

The truly righteous, such as the **Patriarchs and Matriarchs**, have an awesome status in the eyes of God (Chag. 12b; Sanh. 65a; Yoma 38b). They are called the "**pillar** of the World," (i.e., their righteousness sustains existence):

> We learned: There is a single pillar extending from earth to **heaven**, and its name is Righteous. [The pillar] is named after the righteous. For if there are righteous people in the world, then it is strengthened, but if there are not, it is weakened. It supports the world, as it is written, And righteousness is the foundation of the world (Prov. 10:25). If it weakens, then it cannot sustain the world. Therefore, even if there is but one righteous person in the world, it is he who supports the world. Thus it is written, And a righteous [one] is the foundation of the world. (Bahir 71)

The presence of the righteous vindicate the rest humanity:

> For as long as a righteous person dwells in the world, judgment cannot dominate the generation. (Zohar I:180a)

In Genesis Rabbah, the righteous are called the "divine **chariot**"; they are God's vehicle in this dimension of reality (47:6). The righteous bring the **Shekhinah** back into the world, which is why they are also called the "altar of God" (Gen. 33:20; Zohar I:150a). One text even posits that **Jacob**, as the most perfect of the **Patriarchs**, achieved quasi-divine status on **Earth** through his righteousness (Meg. 18a; Gen. R. 79:8; Zohar I:138a).

In keeping with Judaism's esteem for sacred text and learning, most are understood to be masters of **Torah** and the tradition—when a righteous person studies Torah, he or she is on par with the **angels**(Zohar I:12b; Ned. 20b; Kid. 72a). However, it is also possible for non-scholarly individuals to be recognized as tzadikim.

Jewish saints are not automatically associated with wonder working, but it is also not unusual to have reports of the righteous performing wonders and miraculous **healings**. The **Talmud** teaches this is so because of a paradox: having submitted his or her will to the will of God, God in turn fulfills the will of the righteous (Shab. 59b). Based on a verse in 2 Samuel, "The righteous rule the awe of God" (23:3), Talmud Moed Katan 16b quotes God as declaring:

> "I rule over humanity. Who rules over Me? The righteous …" This becomes the basis for explaining the miraculous powers sometimes displayed by the righteous.[1] So great is the power of the righteous through their piety and ethical mastery that they can, at times, reverse even a divine decree, as Ezekiel did when he annulled the Toraitic decree that God would "visit the guilt of the parents upon the children." (Suk. 42a)

Unlike **witchcraft** or scholarly **sorcery**, the wondrous powers of the righteous are directed to the benefit of others: individuals, communities, all Israel, or the

entire world. The most extraordinary tzadikim are declared Kedoshim, “holy ones,” but the righteous are not to be called “holy” in their own lifetime. Upon **Death**, the souls of the righteous descend into **Gehenna** and gather up damaged **souls** to ascend with them (Chag. 15b; *Sha’ar ha-Mitzvot* 112). Once dead, even the mere name of the righteous one possesses its own power. The names of Rabbi Eleazar or Rabbi Joshua ben Perachia, for example, are invoked for healing and protection on **incantation bowls**. Writing the name of the **Baal Shem Tov** on an **amulet** makes it effective (ShB). The bodies of the righteous dead do not decay, or decay only slowly, and smell fragrant (B.M. 84b). Mystical adepts visit the graves of the righteous dead in the hopes of receiving a revelation or healing (B.M. 85b). In ancient Antioch, the locals felt their **synagogue** was a place of power because it was built over the graves of Jewish martyrs.[2]

God exults in the righteous dead and gathers with them in **Eden** at midnight to **study** Torah (Ber. 3b; Zohar I:10b, 60b). *SEE* OHEL; SEGULAH Or Segulot.

1. Lauterbach, “The Belief in the Power of the Word,” 290–92.

2. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 275.

Rigyon: (רגיון). A fiery river that flows in **heaven**. Every day **serafim** issue forth from it and the other **angels** purify themselves by immersing in it. **Moses** had to cross it to receive the **Torah** (*BhM* 1:60; LOTJ III:112, Ir El Gibborim piyut). *SEE* NAHAR DENUR; RIVER.

Ring: (טבעת). Rings, in a way akin to seals, can grant one power over the spirits. Both rings and seals of power have a long history in Jewish tradition, beginning with King **Solomon**. According to the **Testament of Solomon**, a pseudepigraphic work of late antiquity that serves as the basis for a whole genre of Solomonic magical lore, King Solomon created a ring using a divine name of power and inscribed it with a seal, either a pentagram or hexagram (traditions vary). With this ring, he was able to enslave **demons** and he compelled them to help him construct the **Temple** in **Jerusalem**–a mythic illustration of the Jewish belief that there is nothing in the universe that is irredeemable, or cannot be bent to divine service.

Josephus describes how an **exorcism** was performed with a ring containing a special root (Ant. 8). Rings incorporating protective **amulets** were frequently made in Greco-Roman times. In **Hechalot** literature, rings feature prominently, both as objects of power held by **angels** (Hechalot Rabbati) and as seals used by human adepts for accessing the heavenly precincts (Merkavah Rabbah).

A fragment from the Cairo Geniza describes how to make a magic ring (cover an egg first with **semen** and then with **incantations**, bury it in cow excrement for forty days, recover the egg and find an image of a bird on it, then **sacrifice** that part of the egg over a **coin** and make the coin into a ring), but the part of the text explaining the purpose of the ring did not survive. If one assumes there is a magical analogy involved, this ring was probably intended either as a **love** charm or for **fertility**.

But it is Solomon's ring that has captured the imagination of readers over the centuries. Not only is it good for exorcisms and demon management, but it also gives you the power to speak with animals. Discussions, recipes, and diagrams of the ring repeatedly appear in works such as the medieval Mafteach Shlomo (Key of Solomon) and is invoked on amulets for protection against demons.[1]

In the 17th to 18th centuries, during the height of the "Baal Shems," the wandering shamans of eastern Europe, there are several references to silver rings of protection of **healing**, so-called "**segulah** rings." They are mentioned in personal correspondence and a few published texts, such as Kav haYashar. The latter even describes the process of fabricating such a ring; these rings were credited with controlling epilepsy and proving "security" day and **night**. This may be just as it sounds, a shield against physical dangers, but also may be a euphemism for sexual incontinence (conscious temptations, erotic dreams, and nocturnal emissions).

1. Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae,* 93.

Ritual: Judaism is often characterized as a "performative religion," a tradition that emphasizes action, both ethical and ritual, over the quest for correct doctrine. It is a faith of "deeds, not creeds," as one wag put it. And ritual action, in all forms, is a major element of living Jewishly.

This book defines a ritual as any conscious symbolic behavior involving verbal and/or performative action that is directed toward a cosmic structure and/or numinous presence (adapted from Evan Zuesse). For the purposes of this book, Jewish rituals can be categorized as follows (with some inevitable overlap):

Lifecycle rituals: Ceremonies acknowledging transitions and liminal/transitional moments in life. Examples in Judaism include rituals of **birth**, coming of age, **marriage**, and **Death**.

Calendric rituals: Rites that mark seasonal and historic moments of sacred significance, such as Rosh Hashanah, **Yom Kippur**, **Passover**, **Sukkot**, **Shavuot**, Purim, and Chanukah.

Protective rituals: Rituals that prevent or reverse negative events or influences. Examples in Judaism include **purification**, **healing**, segulah, **exorcism**, mourning, and **blessings**.

Communion rituals: Rites that bring one (or the community) into the presence of the divine. In Judaism these include blessing, **circumcision**, **prayer**, **ascent**, and **incubation**.

Exchange/Substitution rituals: Ceremonies that involve an offering to divine forces, usually in the hope of receiving some benefit or to gain power, such as **sacrifice**, **fasting**, kapparah, **divination**, or **incantations**.[1]

1. This list is a modified version of the taxonomy of Catherine Bell as described in Davila's "Ritual in the Jewish Pseudepigrapha" draft article, http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/academic/divinity/ritual_pseud_paper.htm.

River: (נחל/Nachal; נהר/Nahar). In Jewish mythology, a river represents either a channel of life and bounty, or an obstacle and/or point for transformation (a "liminal" zone). Examples of the first archetype include the four rivers that flowed out of **Eden** and in the birth narrative of **Moses** and the purifying river that will flow from **Jerusalem** in messianic times (Zech. 14; Ezek. 47:1–12). The latter idea appears in the incident of **Jacob** wrestling with the **angel**. Similarly, in **Midrash** Tanchuma it is reported that **Satan** transformed himself into a river to keep **Abraham** from fulfilling God's command to **sacrifice Isaac**.

Rivers also flow in both heavenly and subterranean realms.

> "The Throne [of Glory] is established upon seven rivers corresponding to the seven clouds of Glory." (Re'uyot Yehezkel; J. Suk. 5:1, 55a)

Gedulat Moshe claims there are only four rivers. Underground rivers, sometimes related to the currents of the **abyss**, are the conduits through which the supernal "female" waters flow (Tanh. Kedoshim 10; Zohar I:78a). "River" is also one of the terms for Binah (Zohar III:4a, 10b). Famous Jewish supernatural rivers include the Nahar DeNur, Rigyon, and Sambatyon.

There are various ways to use the supernatural power of rivers here on **Earth**. Torah **study** by a riverside helps learning to flow continuously, just as the water flows continuously (Hor. 12a). Immersion in a river is both a means of **purification** and a way to experience a revelation or **vision**. *SEE* SAR HA-TORAH; SUMMONING.; WATER

River of Light or Fire: (נהר דנור/Nahar DeNur; Rigyon). This **river** is the passage from lower to higher realms and is the conduit for **angels** to move between

heaven and **Earth** (Dan. 7:10; SGE).

The River features prominently in **apocalyptic** and **pseudepigraphic** literature of the Greco-Roman period. This river will destroy the world and the righteous will resurrect from it (Sibylline Oracles 2:196–213, 286–308; Wisdom of Ben Sira 15:16–17). The same themes carry over into rabbinic literature. Angels spring daily from its flow:

> Aba said: "A thousand thousand ministered unto Him"—at the river of fire, for it is said: A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him; thousand thousands ministered unto Him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him (Dan. 7:10). Whence does it come forth? —From the sweat of the **Chayyot**, And whither does it pour forth? R. Zutra b. Tobiah said that Rab said: Upon the head of the wicked in Gehinnom … (Chag. 13b–14a)

The stars, too, emerge from this river, which surrounds the firmament (Sefer **Raziel**). Created on the first day, the angelic sweat is the result of their bearing the **Throne of Glory** (Gen. R. 78.1; PdRE 4). The **souls** of the dead must immerse themselves in this river before they can enter the **World to Come**. The river ceases to flow on the **Sabbath** (Ex. R. 15:6; Lam. R. 3:8; Gedulat Moshe 5; Zohar I:201a; Zohar II:217b, 247a). In another section of the **Zohar** the "river" is yet another term for **Yesod**, the divine generative force that fructifies the lower worlds (II:210b–211a). *SEE* RIGYON.

Robe: *SEE* GARMENT.

Rock: (צוּר/Tzur, also Even; Sela). As a **totem** of permanence, endurance, and stability, God is sometimes called "the Rock" in the **Bible** and rabbinic tradition. In **Jerusalem**, the **Foundation Stone** seals away the waters of the **abyss**, keeping the world from reverting to a state of **chaos**.

Rocks also have power. The **tzohar** was a **healing** stone owned by the **Patriarchs**. Likewise, **gemstone** in general have been held to have healing properties. Jewish **incantation bowls** frequently mention a particular evil spirit known as a "pebble **demon** ."[1] **geomancy**, the use of pebbles or sand for the purposes of **divination**, also appears in medieval Jewish literature.

1. Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 68.

Rod: (מטה, מוט). A rod and/or staff is a symbol of authority in many cultures. Jewish tradition tells of staves endowed with miraculous powers. In the **Bible**, the staff of **Aaron** was transformed into a **serpent** and was the instrument for summoning the first three **plague** against **Egypt** (Ex. 7:17, 8:5, 8:16–17, 9:23,

10:13).

Aaron’s rod, however, also delivered **signs** when not in his hands, as when it budded and blossomed overnight as part of a trial by **ordeal** (Num. 17:8–10). Moses also possessed a rod (Ex. 4:20) that he used in performing miraculous deeds (Ex. 14:16; Num. 20:11). This staff was more than just an ordinary pole in the **hands** of a **prophet**; Moses calls it the matei ha-Elohim, “rod of God,” suggesting it was a device of power unto itself (Num. 17:9).

Later tradition claims all biblical references to staves (Ps. 89:32 and Isa. 10:24, for example) actually allude to a single wondrous rod that was given to **Adam**, then traveled with the Patriarchs, Prophets, and kings of Israel across history (Num. R. 18:23; PdRE 40; Sefer Zerubbabel):

> (Gen. 32:10, 38:18) It is likewise the holy rod with which Moses worked (Ex. 4:20, 21), with which Aaron performed wonders before Pharaoh (Ex. 7:10), and with which, finally, David slew the giant Goliath (1 Sam. 17:40). David left it to his descendants, and the Davidic kings used it as a scepter until the destruction of the Temple, when it miraculously disappeared. When the Messiah comes it will be given to him for a scepter in token of his authority over the heathen. (Yalkut Ps. 110)[1]

This rod, created on the eve of the sixth day (Avot 5.6), was made of either sapphire or almond wood and bore an inscription of the **Tetragrammaton** as well as an acrostic phrase constructed from the initials for the ten plagues (Mid. Teh. 9:1; Pes. 54a). It radiated **light** from the divine name (Zohar I:9a). Like Excalibur, only the rightful owner could withdraw the rod once it was planted in the ground:

> Created at twilight, before the Sabbath, it was given to Adam in the Garden of Eden. Adam gave it to Enoch, who gave it to Methuselah; he in turn passed it on to Noah. Noah bequeathed it to his son Shem, who transmitted it to Abraham. From Abraham to Isaac, and then to Jacob, who took it with him to Egypt. Jacob gave it to Joseph; upon Joseph’s death all his possessions were removed to Pharaoh’s place. Jethro, one of Pharaoh’s advisers, desired it, whereupon he took it and stuck it in the ground in his garden in Midian. From then on no one could pull out the staff until Moses came. He read the Hebrew on the staff, and pulled it out readily. Knowing then that Moses was the redeemer of Israel, Jethro gave him his daughter Zipporah in marriage. (Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 40)

Hidden away by either **Elijah** or King Josiah (MdRI 1; Tos. Sot. 13a) in time the staff will reappear as a weapon in the hands of Hephzibah, the mother of the **Messiah**:

> Adonai will give Hephzibah, the mother of Menachem son of Amiel, a staff for acts of salvation, he said, “A great star will shine before her. All the stars will swerve from their paths.” Hephzibah, the mother of Menachem son of Amiel, will go out and kill two kings whose hearts are set on doing evil: Nof, king of Yemen … Iszinan, king of Antioch … Now the staff that the Lord will give Hephzibah, the mother of the Menachem son of Amiel, is made of almond wood, and it is hidden away in Rakkath … This is the staff Adonai gave Adam and Moses, and Aaron and Joshua and King David … Hephzibah, the mother of Menachem son of Amiel, will stand at the east gate [of Jerusalem during the eschatological crisis] so that wicked men will not come there … Then Hephzibah, the mother of the Messiah, will come and hand over to him the staff by which the signs were performed. (Sefer Zerubbabel)[2]

It then passes from her to the Messiah ben Joseph and then to the **Messiah** ben David, who will wield it in end-times struggles (Sefer Zerubbabel; PdRE 40; Yalkut Ps. 110 # 869; Buber Tan., Yaera 8).

But even out of reach, this awesome rod has power to help Jews in distress. Several Hebrew and Aramaic **amulets** from Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages invoke the authority of Moses’s rod in granting protection to the bearer:

> And by the rod of Moses and by the frontplate of Aaron the High Priest and by the signet ring of Solomon and [?] of David and by the horns of the altar and the nam[e] [of] the living and existent God: that you should be expelled, (you) [the evil] spirit and evil assailant and every evil des[troyer] from the body of Miriam daughter of [Sarah] … [3]

Christianity developed additional magical traditions about this legendary staff (Heb. 9:4), regarding it to be a relic from the **Tree of Life** and linking it closely to various biblical figures and finally to **Jesus**, for whom the staff served as the cross beam of his crucifix (Origen; Book of the Bee).

1. K. Kohler, “Aaron’s Rod,” in *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnell, 1906), Vol 1.
2. Stern and Mirsky, *Rabbinic Fantasies*, 74–75.
3. Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae*, 93.

Rogziel: (רגזיאל). “God is my Wrath.” A punishing angel of **Gehenna** (Mid. Konen).

Rokeach, Sefer ha-: "Book of the Perfumer." Written by the German Pietist Eleazar ben Judah of Worms, it is mostly an ethical tract, but does contain some information as to the fantastic beliefs and practices of Eleazar and his contemporaries.

Romiel: (רהמאל). One of the seventy **angels** who circle the **Throne of Glory** (Zohar II:2b).

Rose: (שושנה). A symbol of **Kabbalah** , according to the **Zohar**, the "thirteen-petalled rose" is the mystical **Body** of the people **Israel**, through whom God's thirteen attributes are activated in **Creation**.

Rosh Hashanah: (ראש השנה). "Head of the Year." The Jewish New Year. On this day, Israel performs a **ritual** of divine "enthronement, "acknowledging God as its king, accompanied by the blasts of the shofar. This is also the anniversary of the creation of the world, which began on the first of Tishrei. On this day, the whole world is judged and those who merit another year of life are written in the Book of Life.

There are a variety of practices Jews around the world engage in during the holiday in order to ensure good fortune, such as **eating** certain vegetables: leeks, pumpkins, fennels, and dates. Some Jews serve the heads of **fish**, or even **goats** and calves, to ensure that the family "will be at the head and not at the tail" in the year ahead. By the same token, **nuts** should be avoided, because in **gematria** the Hebrew word for "nut," egoz, numerically equals "**Chet**," **sin**. *SEE* NEW YEAR.

Rosh Chodesh: (ראש חודש). **Prayers** are said for each new moon on the **Sabbath**> before they begin. The only exception is the month of Tishrei. Because Rosh Hashanah begins that month, and that is the time when God judges the world and determines who will live and die, it is believed that not proclaiming the beginning of the month will confuse **Satan** and the **Angels of Death**. *SEE* NEW MOON.

Ruach: (רוח). "Wind/Spirit." *SEE* WIND.

Ruach Chayyim: A 16th-century tract containing actual Ruach Tumah. *SEE* UNCLEAN SPIRITS OR IMPURE SPIRITS.; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY; EXORCISM

Ruach Elohim: *SEE* HOLY SPIRIT.

Ruach P'sak'nit: (רוח פסקנית). "Intervening/Intercessory Spirit." A celestial defender of **Israel**. Perhaps based on the recording **angel** who pleads on behalf of suffering Israel in the book of 1 Enoch (89.76), he goes by three names—Piskon, Itamon, and Sigaron (Sanh. 44b). He is given permission to dispute with God over matters pertaining to the Jewish people (Tanchuma, V'zot ha-B'rachah).

[contents]

S



Sabbath: (שבת/Shabbat). The Jewish day of rest. The seventh day of the week, Shabbat (derived from the **Hebrew** verb "to rest") is declared by God to be holy, a day commemorating the six days of **Creation** (Gen. 1).

The human observance of this holiday is repeatedly mandated by the **Torah**. It has long been understood in Jewish tradition that the right to Sabbath rest reveals a divine aspect of humanity; we, like God, are to rest one day in seven and must extend that same privilege to the creatures dependent upon us (Ex. 20). Attentive observance of the Sabbath is even regarded to be equal to the observance of all the other commandments of the Torah (Ex. R. 25:12).

The idea of the Sabbath was one of the six things that preceded Creation, even though it was the last thing to actually be created (Shab. 10b; *MdRI* BeShallach).

The universe itself is constructed around the Sabbath, for there will be six ages that precede the seventh, messianic age. The Sabbath is therefore described as a "foretaste" of messianic times (Ned. 3:9; Ex. R. 25:12; Zohar II:88a–89a; Sha'arei Gan Eden 12c). Since customarily a day begins at sunset, the Sabbath is observed from sunset Friday to sunset on Saturday.

Besides tropes of creation and rest, there is a recurrent theme of pairing that finds many echoes in Sabbath traditions, echoing the pattern of paired creations that occurred during the six days of active creation (Betz. 15b–16a; Bahir 57). Aside from lighting a minimum of two lights, serving two challot **breads** and other rites involving doubles, there is a Talmudic tradition that two **guardian angels** accompany each person on the Sabbath, a good one and a destructive one. If the person honors the Sabbath properly, the good angel declares "May it be so next Sabbath" and the destructive angel must respond "Amen." If the person desecrates the Sabbath, the destructive angel gets to say, "May it be so next Sabbath," and the good angel is compelled to say "Amen" (Shab. 119b). A song to greet these angels, Shalom Aleichem, eventually became a fixed part of Sabbath liturgy. In a similar vein, it is taught that a Jew is given a second, additional **soul** for the duration of the Sabbath (Betz. 15b–16a; Tan. 27b).

In Lurianic mystical tradition, the number twelve becomes significant, and in many Chasidic communities, twelve loaves will be provided for a Kiddush meal.

The Sabbath is often personified as the consort of the people **Israel**, the Sabbath Queen (B.K. 32b). The Sabbath is also envisioned as God's daughter, just as Israel is characterized as God's "firstborn son" (Gen. R. 11:8; PR 23:6).

Many aspects of the Sabbath are considered **healing**, protective and spiritually rejuvenating. The fact that the **Bible** speaks of the seventh day as nofesh, "refreshing," but literally "re-souling," helps emphasize the special power of the Sabbath. Havdalah, the ceremony marking the end of the Sabbath, in particular, is associated with **rituals** of **divination**, protection, and power.

The Sabbath looms so large in Jewish imagination that it even has a role in the **World to Come** (Mid. Teh. 73:4; Zohar II:252a–b). Even the souls being punished in **Gehenna** enjoy Sabbath rest. Only those who were Sabbath desecrators in life do not get to participate in the Sabbath respite of Gehenna (Zohar II:251a).

Sabbath Queen, the: (שבת המלכה). Starting in **Talmud**, the day of rest becomes personified as Shabbat ha-Malkah, the Sabbath Queen, Israel's consort, comfort, and companion (Shab. 119a; B.K. 32b). In **Midrash**, we read:

Rabbi Simon bar Yochai said: “The Sabbath said before God: ‘Master of the worlds! Each day has its mate, but I have none! Why?’ The Blessed Holy One answered her: ‘The Community of Israel is your mate.’ And when Israel stood before Mount Sinai, the Blessed Holy One said to them: ‘Remember what I told the Sabbath: The Community of Israel is your mate. Therefore, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’ ” (Gen. R. 11:8, PR 23:6)

This feminine figure comes to occupy a prominent position in Judaic mythology.



Sabbath Queen by E. M. Lilien

Kabbalists find even more profound implications in these Sabbath metaphors and practices. For them, this image of the Sabbath as a regal bride alludes to a divine process of cosmic/erotic significance. So when Jews joyously welcome the Sabbath with feasting and celebration, and subsequently have marital intercourse on Friday **night**, they are actually fulfilling a critical role in facilitating the hieros gamos, the conjoining of the masculine and feminine aspects of God, which in turn unleashes a down flow of vital energy and blessings into the lower worlds.[1] This is because the Sabbath is also identified with the **Shekhinah**, the female aspect of the **Godhead** and the consort of the masculine **Yesod**/Holy Blessed One (Zohar II:88b–89a, 131b, 135a–b).

Many mystical customs observed during the day are meant to facilitate this cosmic union. Mystically minded Jews sing songs directly to her on Friday afternoon before the Queen “descends” to grace the world for twenty-four hours

(Siddur). The home, like a bridal chamber, must be made worthy for her temporary presence. **Zohar** declares:

> One must prepare a comfortable seat with cushions and decorative covers, from all that is found in the house, like one who prepares a canopy for a bride. For the Sabbath is a queen and a bride. This is why the masters of the Mishnah used to go out on the eve of Sabbath to receive her on the road, and used to say: “Come, O bride, come, O bride!” And one must sing and rejoice at the table in her honor … one must receive the Lady with many lighted candles, many enjoyments, beautiful clothes, and a house embellished with many fine appointments. (Zohar III:272b; also see Shab. 119a–b; B.K. 32b)

On Friday night, Jewish mystics will also sing songs with allusions to the “apple orchard,” the mystical realm where the masculine side of God and his consort Shekhinah unite. Clearly, the human coupling that happens following the Sabbath evening celebrations is the apex of this cosmic drama, and there are a number of mystical **prayers** and practices that can accompany coitus (Hechalot Rabbati 852; Zohar II:88b, 131b, 135a–b). *SEE* SABBATH; SEX.

1. Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in Classical Kabbalah*, 106–16.

Sacrifice: (עבודה/Avodah, also Korban). Not actually called “sacrifice” (a Latin-derived term), but avodah “service” or korbanot “draw-close/offerings,” the offering of material gifts to God was fundamentally an elaborate, ritualized feast. Most of the korban was, in fact, not burnt up on the altar (with one exception, the olah), but consumed in God’s presence following the **ritual** by the people who donated the sacrifice and by the **priests** who performed it. Following the logic of Exodus 24:

> And to Moses He said: “Come up unto Adonai, you, Aaron, Nadav, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship at a distance; and Moses alone shall come near unto Adonai; but they shall not come near; neither shall the people go up with him …”And Moses wrote all the words of Adonai, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the mount, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel … And he sent the young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed well-being offerings of oxen to Adonai … Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadav, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet the like of a paved work of sapphire stone, and the like of the very heaven for clarity. And against the

princes of the children of Israel he did not strike out [for looking upon God], but they beheld God, and then eat and drank.

These korbanot, true to their name, were seen as a means to "draw close" to divinity.

The **Bible** describes a variety of sacrificial offers made by the Israelites on different occasions: Olah (Burnt, or Total, the only offering that is totally consumed on the altar), Shlamim (Well-being), **Chet** (Sin), Minchah (Meal), Chagigah (Festival), and Asham (Guilt). Human sacrifice, while honored among the other Semitic peoples of the ancient Near East, is expressly forbidden for Israelites.

Scholars argue over the degree to which the Israelite sacrificial cult served a magical function in biblical religion. Clearly, the Israelites did not believe that their offerings sustained the God of Israel, as their neighbors believed they were doing with their gods. Some of the most notable magical elements found in neighboring cults, such as reciting **incantations** over sacrifices, are almost completely absent from Israelite practice.[1]

Many Israelites, however, believed that making material sacrifices in the form of meal, **oil**, **salt**, water, and especially animals, was the key to pleasing YHVH. So while there was no evidence of a theology of "dependent deity," or that there was a notion of divine-human mutual dependence, there were clearly some theurgic assumptions underlying the Israelite ideology of sacrifice. Moreover, there are in the Bible remnant indications of earlier, more clearly magical beliefs. These are preserved in **Hebrew** idioms and early stories about the sacrifices. Thus the Torah speaks of sacrifices as "making a pleasing odor" to God's nostrils (Gen. 8). And we have an example of a "sacred meal" being shared with the deity, alluded to in the story of Moses and the elders ascending **Mount Sinai** (Ex. 24).

It is also evident that ancient Israelites did not have one shared understanding of what the sacrifices represented. The writers of the Bible have very specific notions about the limited role of sacrifices in the life of God (they are an external **signs** of human internal desire to draw close to God, but mean little or nothing to God qua God). Still, the fact that there are prophetic complaints that their contemporaries misunderstand the meaning of their offerings reveals that many Israelites continued to see the sacrifices in more frankly magical terms than the biblical authors.

After the sacrifice cult ceased following the destruction of the Temple, the Rabbis spiritualized the concept of physical offerings to God by declaring

prayer to be the "sacrifice of the heart." Magical traditions, by contrast, continued to use modified forms of material sacrifice. *SEE* ALTAR; ANIMALS.; BLOOD; FIRE; INCENSE; MAGIC; SUBSTITUTION.; TEMPLE.

1. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 110–15.

Sadness: Judaism, especially **Chasidism**, teaches that melancholy, bitterness, anger, and depression separate one from God and interfere with spiritual communion.

Safed: (צפת). One of the four holy cities of Judaism, this Galilean hilltop city in Israel has long been associated with mystical movements and activities. Simon bar Yochai is buried nearby in Meron, as are other ancient and medieval Jewish luminaries. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Safed became the home of several mystical brotherhoods. Moses Cordovero, **Isaac Luria**, Joseph Caro, and **Chayyim Vital** were among its more famous denizens. They too, in turn, were buried in the area, and in time their graves have become the focus of pilgrimage and veneration.[1]

There is a certain air of "Kabbalah Disneyland" to contemporary Safed, but authentic schools and practitioners are still sprinkled amidst the art galleries, week-long seminars, and other commercial ventures that capitalize on its mystical associations.

1. Fine, *Safed Spirituality*, 1–37; Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judais*m, 124–58.

Sahriel: A **fallen angel** who teaches mankind lunar astronomy (I Enoch).

Salt: (מלח). Salt is essential to life and a symbol of vitality, fitness, and the sea. The most famous fantastic salt tale is that of Lot's wife being transformed after gazing at the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 20; Gen. R. 50:4, 51:5). Salt was used in the **sacrifices** of the **Temple** (Lev. 2:13). **Bread** and salt provide spiritual protection against the **evil eye**. Thus newborns may be rubbed with salt as a defense against **demons** . For the same reason, newlyweds will be sprinkled with salt.[1] Conversely, the Shulchan Aruch warns that handling salt with one's thumb could bring bad luck.

1. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 122–23, 160, 173.

Samael: (סמאל). This prince of **demons** and/or destructive **angel** has had many incarnations in Jewish literature. The derivation of the name of this mightiest of demons is hard to determine. Some say it comes from **shamam**, "desolation," but that seems wrong as the first letter of Samael's name is a **sin**, not a **shin**.

Others offer that it means “left hand of God,” which is highly suggestive of later Jewish thought on the nature of the demonic, but the relationship between the name and the word s’mol is more an assonance then linguistically justified. Some secondary sources translate it as “Gall of God,” evidently associating it with Samael’s purported role as the **Angels of Death**.

In several texts, “Samael” seems to be the name of the Angel of Death. At least once in the **Zohar**, he is declared the “shadow of death,” a kind of consort to Death (I:160b). In other texts, he is regarded as synonymous with **Satan**, but almost as often he is treated as a separate entity (BhM 1:58–61; *Ex. R*. 21:7). Elsewhere, Samael is called “chief of all the satans” (Deut. R. 11:10; III Enoch). In Midrash Konen, Samael is the prince of the third gate to **Gehenna**, the gate that opens on **Jerusalem** (2:30). One text designates him the **guardian angels** of Rome, the nemesis of Israel. He sits in the celestial **palaces** with Satan and Dumiel and plots the overthrow of Israel (R.H. 8a–b). When he rejoiced over God’s decree that the ten martyrs should die at Roman hands, God punished him by afflicting Rome with all the **diseases** of **Egypt**.



Destructive angel by E. M. Lilien

Samael has made many earthly appearances. In Pirke de-Rabbi Eleazar 13, he is described as the greatest angel in **heaven**, who out of jealousy over the creation of humanity, decided to tempt **Eve**. Appearing in the form of the **serpent**, he actually copulated with her (Targum Jonathan, Gen. 4:1; *Zohar*

I:37a). He is one candidate that the tradition has identified to be the angel who wrestled with **Jacob** (Zohar I:148a–b). Satan-like, he accused Israel of **idol** worship while they dwelt in Egyptian slavery (Ex. R. 21:7). He attempted to claim the **soul** of **Moses**, who fended him off with his miraculous rod. In the Treatise on the Left Emanation, Samael is the animus of Adam; the **evil** doppelganger of the first man that came into being with the first human transgression:

> The first prince and accuser, the commander of Jealousy and Enmity … he is called "evil" not because of his nature but because he desires to unite and intimately mingle with an emanation not of his nature … it is made clear that Samael and Lilith were born as one, similar to the form of Adam and Eve who were also born as one, reflecting what is above. This is the account of Lilith which was received by the Sages in the Secret Knowledge of the Palaces. The Matron Lilith is the mate of Samael. Both of them were born at the same hour in the image of Adam and Eve, intertwined in each other.[1]

As this passage suggests, Jewish **mysticism** has a dialectic notion of "evil"; all things emanate from God, so Samael is one of God's "severe agents," yet he grows beyond the attenuated form God intended because he feeds upon the evil we humans do.

The **Zohar** has the most extensive, if sometimes confusing, description of Samael. The Zohar builds upon the image of Samael found in the Treatise on the Left Emanation: he is the demon king and consort of **Lilith**; together they are the evil counterparts of Adam and Eve. He is the tempting angel from whom the evil inclination emanates. When he copulates with Lilith, the male and female principles of the "left side emanation" are united and achieve their full potential and demon souls are spawned, so he is in effect the evil left-side counterpart of Tiferet in the sefirotic system.

In later Lurianic thought, Samael is the organizing force of the **kelipot**, the garments of evil that enshroud the divine sparks contained in all things. *SEE* DEMONS

1. Dan and Kiener, *The Early Kabbalah*, 172.

Sambatyon, the River: (שמבתיון). A mythic river in the east, beyond which the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel were taken by God to protect them from their Assyrian captors.

The Sambatyon is no ordinary **river**. Various legends describe it as wide as a sea or flowing with all kinds of fantastic hazards: rolling boulders and flowing

fire and/or a **Cloud of Glory**. The river ceases to flow on the **Sabbath** in honor of the divine command to rest that day. There are tales of individual adventurers who have reached the lost tribes by crossing at that time, but the Sabbath-observant Israelites will not cross back. The ten lost tribes will dwell there on the far side of the river until the coming of the **Messiah** and the ingathering of all Jewish exiles (War 7:5; Sanh. 65b; Gen. R. 11:5, 73:6).

Samech: (ס). The fifteenth letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**. It has the vocalic value of “s” and the numeric value of sixty. It is an enclosed loop in shape, signifying the feminine, enclosure, secrecy, protection, and support.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 159–70.

Samech Mem: (ס״ם). A euphemism for **Samael**, used to avoid saying his name and thereby attracting his attention.

Samkhiel: (סמכיאל). “God Is My Support.” A destructive **angel** in charge of the Beinonim, the “morally divided” **souls** sent to **Gehenna**. He oversees their **purification** from **sin** through fiery torments, and then their eventual return to God (III Enoch; BhM 5:186).

Samriel: (סמריאל). “Bristle of God.” According to the **Zohar**, he is a fearsome **angel** who serves as guardian of the gates of **Gehenna**(I:62b).

Samson: This biblical hero, a shofet (judge/chieftain) of ancient Israel, he is remembered for his remarkable strength. As a redeemer of Israel, his **birth** was heralded to his mother and father by an **angel** (Judg. 13). He was dedicated to God from birth, and lived his entire life as a Nazirite. God blessed him with extraordinary physical strength, which he demonstrated in a series of amazing feats.

Nevertheless he was easily distracted from his dedication to God’s purpose. This made him vulnerable to the schemes of his enemies, the Philistines. Eventually he was shorn of his long **hair**, which the Philistines believed was the source of his power, after which he was blinded and enslaved. Both his faith in God and his hair grew during his servitude, and he eventually was able to ambush the Philistines while in their **Temple**, bringing the building down upon everyone inside, including himself (Judg. 13–17).

Given the already fantastic nature of the biblical account, there is surprisingly little additional rabbinic material about him and his adventures. There are, however, a number of Kabbalistic traditions regarding Samson. For one, the

Hasidic Master Tzadok ha-Kohen of Lublin put forward the argument that Samson's multiple **marriages** to non-Jewish women were part of a messianic scheme to uplift the **kelipot** (the "fallen sparks") among the gentiles in order to prepare the way for the **Messiah** (Yisrael Kedoshim). This is further developed in an obscure Kabbalistic treatise by a Rabbi Isaac Messer, U'mi-Midbar Matanah. In it, R. Messer draws together several esoteric sources. Samson's very name, shimshon, "sun," who mates with D'lilah, "night," signifies his spiritual mission, which was to reconcile cosmic opposites, in this case Jews and non-Jews.[1] Samson was meant for this mission because, in fact, he was the **reincarnation** of Jeptha, the son of **Noah**, and **ancestor** of many gentile **nations** (Galya Raza 42c). Thus, Samson's great strength was a personification of the power of the nations, derived from his (partly) non-Jewish **soul**. Yet this mission in ancient times failed. But Samson will be reincarnated one more time, as Serayah, the Danite, the Messiah's general at the end of times (Zohar III:194b).

1. B. Naor, *Kabbalah and the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Orot, 2001).

Samuel: Biblical **prophet**, seer, and judge. Dedicated to be a lifelong Nazirite by his mother, Samuel first heard the voice of God as a child. He heard God calling him as he slept in the **tabernacle** compound, suggesting he had an **incubation** revelation. From that time on, he regularly communed with God. Most memorably, God commissioned him to anoint kings over Israel—first **Saul**, and later, **David**. After his death, his **ghost** was summoned from the grave for a séance with his former protégé, King Saul (1 and 2 Samuel). *SEE* PROPHECY AND PROPHETS.

Samuel ben Isaac: Talmudic Sage and angelologist (ca. 3rd century). It is Samuel who taught that ministering angels are temporary creations that emerge every day from the *Nahal DeNur*, the heavenly River of Light, to sing God's praises and then vanish (Chag. 14a). He also taught that angels oversee all aspects of both life and **Death** (Gen. R. 9:10). According to the **Talmud**, when Samuel passed away, **heaven** acknowledged his death with a miraculous **sign**: uprooting all the cedar **trees**s in Israel (M.K. 25b; J. A.Z. 3:1).

Samuel ben Kalonymus he-Chasid: Mystic and theurgist (German, ca. 13th century). A member of the circle of **German Pietist** , Samuel was able to use the divine names to achieve all kinds of wonders: **healing** illness, illuminating a darkened room, and **summoning** and controlling animals. There is one story of Rabbi Samuel fighting a magical duel with a gentile sorcerer (Ma'aseh Buch).

Sandalfon: (סנדלפון). Sandalfon is a flaming princely **angel** (*Sar*) and an **Ofan**, or wheel-shaped angel that stretches from **heaven** to **Earth**, a distance of “500 years” (BhM 1:58–61). He is the wheel with eyes described by **Ezekiel**(Ezek. 1:15) that helps propel the divine **chariot**. Some regard his turning to be the source of heavenly thunder.

Like **Metatron**, the name of this numinous servant of God is derived from Greek, rather than **Hebrew**, but there is no totally satisfactory explanation for the name. According to the **Talmud**, Sandalfon stands behind the **Throne of Glory** and continuously crowns God with a **crown** woven (the image is that of Caesar’s laurel crown) from the **prayers** of **Israel** (Chag. 13a–b). Some sources claim Sandalfon is the angelic name of **Elijah**, the **prophet** who ascended bodily into heaven. In this association he functions as psychopomp—the gatekeeper who conveys **souls** to their afterlife abode. Other sources identify him as the angelic ruler of Asiyah, the material world of action (PR 20:4; Mid. Teh. 19:7). He is also sometimes invoked on **amulets** as a protector against evil forces.

In all his iterations (a wheel, conveyor of **prayers** or souls, the connection between heaven and **Earth**, the spirit of the material plane), he personifies the movement and transfer of forces between higher and lower realms. He is the cyclic, dynamic mandala of divine engagement with creation.

Sanegor: (סנגור). “Advocate.” An **angel** or one of the ancestral dead (such as **Abraham**) who argues against **Satan** when the Adversary criticizes Israel in the heavenly court (Me’am Lo’ez). *SEE* ANCESTORS; RIGHTEOUS, THE

Sanoi, Sansanoi, and Semangelof: (סנוי סנסנוי סמנגלוף). Three **guardian angels** frequently invoked on **amulets**. They are the nemesis of **Lilith** and have the authority to turn her away (AbbS). The three are featured in one of the most commonly reproduced amulets in circulation, which appears in most editions of Sefer **Raziel**.

Santriel: (סנטריאל). A punishing angel who has authority over the **souls** of **Sabbath** desecrators (Zohar II:25a).

Sapphire: (ספיר). Sapphire, one of the most precious minerals on **Earth**. Yet in Judaism, sapphire is more metaphor than mineral. First and foremost, it is the color of **heaven**, a signifier of divinity. Reference to celestial sapphire appears repeatedly in the TaNaKH:

Above the expanse over their heads was the semblance of a throne, in appearance like sapphire (Ezek. 1:26—reiterated later in 10:1).

Moses and Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, and the seventy elders arose. They saw Adonai of Israel and beneath His feet, like a brickwork of sapphire … And to the chieftains of the Children of Israel, He [God] did not strike His hand. They viewed Adonai, they ate and drank.” (Ex. 24:9–11)

The word used in both places, sapir (“sapphire”), is a Sanskrit loan word. Strikingly, there is a Semitic root that closely resembles it: samech-payh-yud-resh. This word is the Semitic root for “message” or “missive,” and is the basis for all terms related to “book” (**Sefer**), “story” (sipur), “recount” (safar), “number” (mispar) and “[primordial] number” (sefirah).

While the commonality of these two word forms is a linguistic coincidence, the possibility that they represent supernal color, book, number, and speech, things that all converge toward a unified spiritual reality, becomes compelling to Jewish mystics. Thus, for example, the medieval esoteric **Bible** commentator Bachya declares the blue signifies **wisdom** (comment on Ex. 28:18).

The classic starting point for this discussion of the supernal association between these terms is found in the terse, enigmatic treatise on word **mysticism**, the Sefer Yetzirah (“Book of Formation”). There the terms Sefer-safar-sipur (book-number-telling) are the “three books” by which God creates the universe (Mishnah 1:1). And while the spelling sapir never actually appears in this cluster, a few of Sefer Yetzirah’s commentators, such as Raavad (Rabbi Abraham ben David of Posquieres [1125–1198]) conclude that Sefer Yetzirah is indeed alluding to the blue stone of divine **visions** (comment on SY 1:1).

Sefer ha-Bahir also addresses this, but takes a different tack. In trying to understand **Sefer Yetzirah's** novel term **sefirot** (“numbers”), a word not seen before, the Bahir appeals back to the TaNaKH, claiming the term is derived from Psalm 19:2, which “recounts”—m’sapprim —the “Glory of God.” In making this exegetical move, Bahir equates sefirot with Kavod, the biblical term of divine **glory** or **emanation** (section 125, Margolis Edition). Like Sefer Yetzirah, the Bahir makes no explicit link in between the words m’sapprim and sapir, though in another passage it declares:

What is the material [literally eretz] that from it everything is engraved? And from it is engraved the heavens? It is the Throne of the Blessed Holy One. It is the precious stone and the sea of wisdom … Rabbi Meir said, Why is blue chosen from among all types colors [for the tzitzit]? Blue resembles the sea,

> the sea resembles the sky, and the sky resembles the Throne of Glory. Thus it is written … under His feet was like a pavement of sapphire … (Ex. 24:10), and, As the likeness of a sapphire stone was the semblance of a throne. (Ezek. 1:26)

This homily places all these concepts—heaven, sapphire stone, throne, wisdom—within a shared semantic field.

Later readers elaborate on that link in the Bahir [1] by reading the Hebrew of 19:2, ha-shamayim m'sapprim kavod el, as "The heavens shine sapphirine [of] the **glory** [of] God," rather than the more conventional translation of "The heavens recount the Glory [of] God." Zohar 1:8a elaborates on the same verse, declaring sapphire signifies the union of masculine and feminine principles of divinity and it is the "radiance" (zahir) that fills the universe:

> M'sapprim signifies that they [the divine groom and bride] radiate a brilliance (zoharah) like that of a sapphire, sparkling and scintillating from one end of the world to the other.

Thus the sapphire comes to exemplify heavenly structures (brickwork, the **Throne of Glory**, the Glory of God, the sefirot), divine knowledge (numbers, books, telling), and supernal energy (the zoharah). This theme of sapphire as a visible signifier of divine entities extends to other sacred narratives, such as the Midrashic tradition that the tablets of the heavenly words, the Ten Commandments, were tablets of sapphire cut from the Throne of Glory (Midrash Lekakh Tov, Ex. 31.18). It also appears in the Hebrew magical tradition that the angelic book given by **Raziel** to **Noah** (and later identified with the text of **Sefer ha-Razim**) was in the form of an engraved sapphire stone (ShR intro.).

A cognate tradition claims that the rod of Moses was an engraved rod of sapphire (Ex. R. 8:3). Zohar links this idea with the "book" tradition by declaring Moses's staff is an allegory for the **sefirot**.

1. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah,* 81.

Sar or Sarim: (שר). "Chieftain/Prince, Archon." Sometimes used to refer to a class of **angels**, such as the Sarei ha-Panim, "the Angels of the Countenance," at other times it is a synonym for angels in general. Thus in Midrash Konen, it is written, "There is not a single [blade of] grass or **tree** that does not have its **Sar** who … makes it grow."

Sar ha-Chalom: (שר החלום). "Prince of Dream." An **angel** of revelation specializing in dream **visions**. *SEE* DREAM; INCUBATION; MAGGID.

Sar ha-Cos and Sar ha-Bohen: (שר הכוס/"Prince of the Cup" and שר הבוהן/"Prince of the Thumb"). **angels** of **divination** that, when summoned, make images appear in reflections on water and on fingernails. Later in the Middle Ages, Jewish tradition starts speaking of "Demons of the Cup and of the Thumb." Evidently, this change is the result of a simple spelling mistake in transmission (**Sar**, "Prince/Angel," ends in a resh, which closely resembles a dalet. Shin-Dalet spells Sheid—an imp or **demon** . It is an object lesson in the importance of good penmanship).[1] *SEE* FINGER; HAVDALAH; HYDROMANCY; WATER

1. Dan, "Samael, Lilith, and the Concept of Evil in Early Kabbalah," *AJS Review* 5 (1980): 17–40.

Sar ha-Panim: (שר הפנים). "Prince of the [Divine] Presence." This **angel** of revelation is often identified with Yofiel, or **Metatron**. He is also associated with the Sar ha-Torah, and the many names and titles may in fact be synonymous. Some texts treat Sar ha-Panim as a class of angels.[1] There are several related texts known to modern scholars, such as Hechalot Rabbati, manuscripts such as Ma'aseh Merkavah, and a Cairo Geniza fragment, that describe the summoning rituals for this angel in detail.[2] *SEE* MAGGID.

1. Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, 221.
2. P. Schafer, *Synopse Zur Hekhalot Lituratur* (Tuebingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1981), 563, 566.

Sar ha-Olam: *SEE* PRINCE OF THE WORLD.

Sar ha-Torah: (שר התורה). "Prince of the Torah." An **angel** of revelation associated with the memorization and recall of **Torah** and Jewish teachings. From Late Antiquity, there are Jewish mystical traditions of an **angel** who could be summoned to help the student of Torah master the text and grant oracular and apocalyptic **visions**.[1] Sometimes the **Sar** is identified as **Metatron** or Yefafiah. One **Hechalot** text describes the angel as enshrouded "in flames of fire, his face the appearance of lightning." *SEE* GALITZUR; MAGGID.; MEDIUM; SUMMONING.

1. Dan, *The Early Jewish Mysticism*, 139–68.

Sar Tzevaot: (שר צבאות). "Prince of Hosts." The warrior **angel** that appeared to **Joshua** outside of Jericho, instructing the Israelite leader on the **ritual** of **circles** and shofar blasts that eventually toppled the city walls (Josh. 5:13–6:5). In some rabbinic traditions, the Sar Tzevaot is identified as **Michael**. In one tradition, he is said to be **Metatron**. *SEE* MALACH ADONAI.

Sarah: (שרה). "Princess." **Matriarchs** and wife of **Abraham**. The Rabbis regarded her to have been a greater **prophet** than her husband (Ex. R. 1:1; Meg.

14a, Seder Olam Rabbah 21). A **Cloud of Glory** hovered over her tent (Gen. R. 60:16). She was the most beautiful woman of her age (and at her age); she was as radiant as the **sun** (Tanh. Lech Lecha 5; Gen. R. 40:5). Miraculously, she gave birth to **Isaac** in her nineties. When Isaac was born, the milk in Sarah's **breasts** was so bountiful she was able to nurse all the infants, numbering in the hundreds, at Isaac's birth feast. (B.M.; PR 43:4). Sarah died in anguish after **Satan** revealed that Abraham had gone to **sacrifice** Isaac without telling her that her son would be spared (Tanh. Vayera 23). Esther was her direct descendant (Gen. R. 58:3).

Sariel: (שריאל). "Chieftain of God." This **angel** is mentioned only in passing in **I Enoch**, but in **Kabbalah** , he is the prince of the **demons** of the air and he serves **Lilith**.

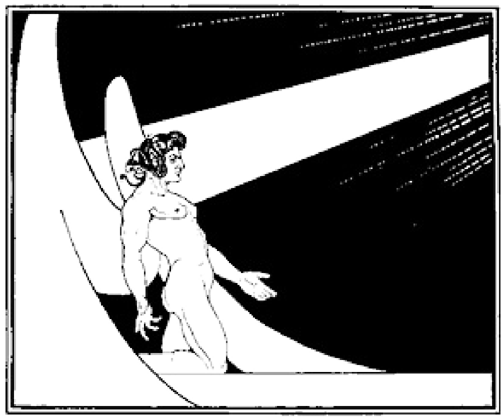
Sartan: (סרטן). "Crab/Cancer." The **zodiac** sign for the month of Tammuz. It is a sign of weakness and vulnerability. Indicative of this is the fact that Tammuz has no festivals or holidays. Rather, it is a month of ill fortune, with a number of Jewish tragedies (the **golden calf** incident, the besieging of **Jerusalem** by the Babylonians) occurring within this sign.[1]

1. Erlanger, *Signs of the Times*, 73–83.

Sarug, Israel: Along with **Chayyim Vital** , the most important disciple of **Isaac Luria**. His interpretations of the master's teachers disagree with Vital on key points. His major work is D'rush ha-Malbush.

Satan, ha-Satan: (השטן). "The Adversary/Accuser." The **angel** of temptation and **sin**. From his first appearance in the book of Job (chapter 1) as one of the B'nai Elohim, the "Sons of God," he has been the most provocative and intriguing angel in Jewish mythology. Satan has been understood and represented in many diverse ways in Jewish literature.

Unlike in Christian mythology, however, where Satan is often regarded as a kind of "anti-God," leading the forces of rebellious angels/demons against God's rule, in Jewish tradition Satan remains subservient to God (B.B. 16a). In Jewish **myth**, he functions as God's "prosecuting attorney," indicting sinners before God and demanding their punishment.



Satan before God by E. M. Lilien

As the angel of temptation, he is also conducting perpetual “sting operations” against mortals, setting them up in situations meant to lead them into transgression:

> Rabbi Meir used to scoff at sinners for giving in to their desires. One day, Satan appeared to him in the guise of a beautiful woman on the other side of the river. There was no ferry, so Rabbi Meir grasped the suspension rope and proceeded across. When he reached halfway, Satan left him saying: Had they not declared in Heaven, “Beware of Rabbi Meir and his Torah” your life would not have been worth two pennies. (Kid. 81a)

But at no point in normative Jewish literature is there any indication that Satan can act contrary to the will of God (B.B. 16a; Zohar I:10b).

That being said, the identity and nature of Satan is quite variable at different times and in different texts. In some sources, Satan is identified as **Samael**, or as the **Angel of Death**(B.B. 16a), but at other times they are regarded as separate entities (Sefer **Hechalot**). “Satan” is sometimes understood to be a proper name, but at other times it is simply an epitaph: **ha-Satan**, “the adversary.” Several Sages even speak in the plural of satanim, as if “adversaries” were a class of destructive angels, rather than a named personality. This reflects a confusion arising from the **Bible** itself, which at times treats him as a distinctive personality (Job 1), but at other points uses the word **Satan** as if referring to an anonymous entity or impersonal force (Zech. 3; Num. 24).

In **Talmud** and **Midrash**, Satan appears in many guises, intent on luring the upright from the straight and narrow. There are famous episodes of Satan tormenting **Noah** , **Abraham**, **Sarah**, **Joseph**, **Moses**, and other ancient worthies. He introduces Noah to **wine**, creating endless mischief to this day (Tanh. Noah 13). He is portrayed as particularly preoccupied with the sins of

Israel. He is responsible for provoking the **golden calf** incident (Shab. 89a). He can also place humans in mortal danger, as he did when he lured David into a confrontation with Ishbi-benob, the brother of **Goliath** (Sanh. 45a). That being said, at least one Sage could see Satan in a sympathetic light:

> Rabbi Levy stated: Satan and Peninah [another unsympathetic figure found in 1 Sam. 1] both acted with the intention to please Heaven. When Satan saw that God was showing favor towards **Job**, he said: Heaven forbid! Shall Abraham's **love** of God be forgotten? [i.e., he provoked God against Job to ensure God's continuing love for Abraham] … Rabbi Acha b. Yaakov lectured thus in Papunia. Satan came to him and kissed his feet. (B.B. 16a)

According to Sefer **Hechalot**, Satan sits in consultation with **Samael** and Dumiel, compiling a ledger of Israel's sins. God in his gracious love, however, sends fiery **serafim** every day to receive those records, with the result that they are burned to a crisp (8a–b).

Satan makes frequent appearances in medieval writings. At times he seems to approach the status of being an autonomous force of evil, but such readings are ambiguous at best. Much more common are the portrayals meant to make logical sense of Satan's role in a monotheistic worldview:

> Come and see, when this evil side descends and roams the world and observes the actions of human beings, all of whom pervert their ways in the world, he ascends and accuses them. If the Blessed Holy One did not feel compassion for the works of His hand, they would not survive in the world. (Zohar I:190b)

SEE DEMONS; EVIL; FALLEN ANGELS.

Satyr: *SEE* GOAT..

Saul: The first king of Israel. At first favored by God and anointed by the **prophet** Samuel, he was filled with a prophetic spirit. When he disobeyed God, however, an evil spirit settled upon him and only the **music** of **David**, the man ordained to replace him, could give him temporary relief. Cut off from God, in desperation he engaged a **necromancer** to arrange a séance with the dead, only to be confronted by the dead spirit of the prophet Samuel and to be informed of his own doom (1 Sam. 9–2 Sam. 4).

Not many fantastic tales of Saul appear in subsequent rabbinic literature, which mostly devotes itself to better understanding the nature of Saul's fall from grace. *SEE* NECROMANCER NECROMANCY; POSSESSION, SPRITIUAL.



The tormented King Saul by E. M. Lilien

Scapegoat: *SEE* AZAZEL; GOAT; YOM KIPPUR.

Scarlet Cord: In the **Temple**, a scarlet strap hung by the sanctuary. At the conclusion of each **Yom Kippur**, it would miraculously turn white, signaling that God had forgiven Israel its **sins** (Yoma 39a).

Schneerson, Menachem Mendel: Chasidic master and failed **Messiah** (American, 1902–1994). The charismatic seventh **rebbe** of the Lubavitch movement, Menachem Mendel was born in eastern Europe, studied engineering in France, but became a Chasidic leader after relocating to America. He was credited with many miraculous healings. Some of his Chasids even claim he revealed auguries to the Israeli army that helped turn the tide in the 1973 war. In the 1990s, his Chasids started to publicize their belief that he was the **Messiah**, a claim he himself never made but never refuted. In 1994, he died.[1] By all indications, he is still dead. *SEE* CHABAD; CHASIDISM.

1. See Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*.

Scrolls: *SEE* SEFER.

Sea: (ים/Yam). According to **Hebrew myth**, the land mass of the world is entirely surrounded by sea. There are upper and lower waters with a primordial ocean of the **abyss** below them both (Mid. Konen 2:32–33). Prior to **Creation**, waters of **chaos** covered the universe (Gen. 1:1; Gen. R. 13:6; PR 48:2).

The ocean contains primordial monsters, like **Leviathan** >and Rahav. Rabba bar Chana tells tales of the many fantastic denizens the sea contains, as well as many the many treasures that will eventually serve as rewards for the **Righteous** (B.B. 74a–b). *SEE* ABYSS; WATER.

Sea Goat: A mythical horned **fish**, three hundred parasangs in length (B.B. 74a). *SEE* ANIMALS.

Sea of Glass/Marble: Human visitors to **heaven** describe a mysterious supernal watery substance spread out before the **Throne of Glory** (Chag. 14b, Hechalot Rabbati, Hechalot Zutarti) that is made out of "marble" but is perceived as **water**, a lethal mistake:

> At the gate of the sixth palace, it seems as though hundreds of thousands and millions of waves of water storm against [the ascending soul], and yet there is not a drop of water, only the ethereal glitter of the marble plates with which the palace is tessellated. But if [the soul] stands before the angels and asks, "What is the meaning of these waters?" they stone it and say, "Wretch, can you not see with your own eyes? Art you perhaps a descendant of those who kissed the Golden Calf and are you unworthy to see the King in His beauty?" [1]

This substance is a threat to those who would draw closer to God, so it is important not to gaze upon it, lest it destroy the mind of the viewer (III Enoch). The matter appears to be a kind of test: can the adept look and think beyond the appearance of a thing to perceive the true spiritual nature of it? *SEE* ASCENT, HEAVENLY.; HECHALOT; YORED MERKAVAH.

1. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 59.

Sea, Prince of the: (שר ים/Sar Yam). *SEE* PRINCE OF THE SEA.

Seal of Solomon: In the ancient **Testament of Solomon**, the seal was identified as a pentagram. In medieval alchemical texts, this was the name given to the **hexagram**. Later it was the hexagram that became known as the Magen David, the "shield of David." This term also refers to **Solomon's** magic **ring**. *SEE* SEAL, MAGICAL.

Seal, Magical: (חותם/Chatom; Taba'at). In different **Hebrew** texts, seals refer to different phenomena. In some, they indicate an object, usually an **amulets** or **ring**, inscribed with the names of **angels** or God (III Enoch; Ma'aseh Merkavah). In others, it seems to be a temporary tattoo like inscription written

on parts of the **Body**, probably contained in a **magic circle** or **magic square** (M. Mak. 3:6; Tos. Mak. 4:15; Yoma 8:3).[1] In either case, the seal is used as a kind of "key" or, more aptly, an "access code" for a mystical ascent or a **summoning** ritual.



Israelite seal with winged sun

Just like the tattoo variety, the metallic, parchment, or paper seals are apparently placed on the body, either as **rings** or pendants, for protection and for gaining authority over angels. One text indicates that the adept simply holds the seals in his hands during the ritual,

> Rabbi Ishmael said: When you come and stand at the gate of the first palace, take two seals, one in each hand: The seal of Tootrusea—YHVH Lord of Israel, and the Seal of Surya the Angel of the Presence … [2]

Sefer **Raziel** details various seals that have magical power, including the "seal of **heaven** and **Earth**." One such seal is diagrammed in the book, though the illustration doesn't specify precisely what this particular seal is to be used for.

The most famous **magical seal** in Jewish occult tradition is the Seal of Solomon, a brass and iron ring inscribed with a pentagram (**Testament of Solomon**) and the **Tetragrammaton** (Git. 68a), given to **Solomon** by Michael, that gave the king the power to communicate with **animals** and to summon and control **demons** . Rabbinic tradition also interprets **circumcision** as a kind of protective seal (Tos. Ber. 6:24; Shab. 137b). *SEE* ASCENT, HEAVENLY.; MA'ASEI-MERKAVAH.

1. Bar-Ilan, "Magic Seals on the Body Among Jews of the First Centuries CE" *Tarbiz* 57 (1988).

2. Blumenthal, *Understanding Jewish Mysticism*.

Seasons: (תקופות/Tekufaot). Each season has its own principal **angel**. According to Jewish **astrology** , the period marking the transition from one season to another is a liminal time when the new angel may not yet be in place, the stars lack governance, and malevolent forces are in ascendance. **Amulets** can counter these effects. *SEE* CALENDAR; ZODIAC.

Seclusion: (התבודדות/Hitbodedut). Usually this refers to physical isolation from others. According to Chasidic teachings, it is part of a contemplative method to achieve devekut. *SEE* MEDITATION.

Second Day of Creation: The only one of the six days of **Creation** that God does not affirm as "good," it is considered a bad luck day. One tradition teaches **Gehenna** was created on that day, which is why God refused to bless it (Gen. R. 4:6, 11:9).

Secret: (סוד/Sod, also Seiter; Middah; Aramaic: Raza). "The secret things belong to the Eternal our God: but those things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this Torah forever" (Deut. 29:29). With regard to occult knowledge, a "secret" has meant different things to different Jewish communities.

In the **Hechalot** texts, Middah (the great "Mystery") is the knowledge of how to use divine names for theurgic purposes.[1] The **German Pietist** taught about Sod ha-Tefillah and Sod ha-Torah—the concealed truths within **prayers** and Scriptures. All verses of the TaNaKH can be read on two level, niglah ("revealed/obvious") and nistar ("concealed"), meaning (Ginnat Egoz, Introduction). According to **Sefer Raziel**, there are three categories of secret knowledge: secrets of Creation, secrets of the **chariot**, and the secrets of the commandments. The medieval philosophers speak of how all Jewish teachings can be compared to "golden **apples** [concealed] in silver filigree" (Prov. 25), that while all Torah is precious, there are more valuable teachings hidden within that most people can only glimpse beneath the surface.

About the only thing that all agree on is that Judaism has (at least) two dimensions of spiritual teachings that coexist together, the exoteric (the commonly revealed) and the esoteric (the concealed), all of it resting upon a **paradox**: a body of concealed revelations which are all published in books.[2]

1. Schafer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, 110–17.

2. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 13–16.

Seder: *SEE* PASSOVER.

Seder Eliyahu or Tanna de Eliyahu: A potpourri of fables, stories, and teachings, loosely strung together by periodic appearances of **Elijah**.

Seder Gan Eden: "The Order of Paradise." A medieval text describing the realm of the afterlife. *SEE* EDEN, GARDEN OF

Seder Olam: "The Order of the World." A medieval chronology of the world, including many miraculous and fantastic elements from Jewish tradition.

Seder Rabbah de Bereshit (also known as Baraita de Ma'aseh Bereshit): A text devoted to the **secrets** of Creation. *SEE* CREATION; MA'ASEI-BERESHIT; YETZIRAH, SEFER.

Sefer: (ספר). "Scroll/Book." The Hebrew word **Sefer** technically refers to a "scroll," a document made up of many pages sewn end-to-end and then rolled up. After the invention of the **codex**, in which pages are all bound together along one edge, the term comes to mean "book" in the most generic sense.

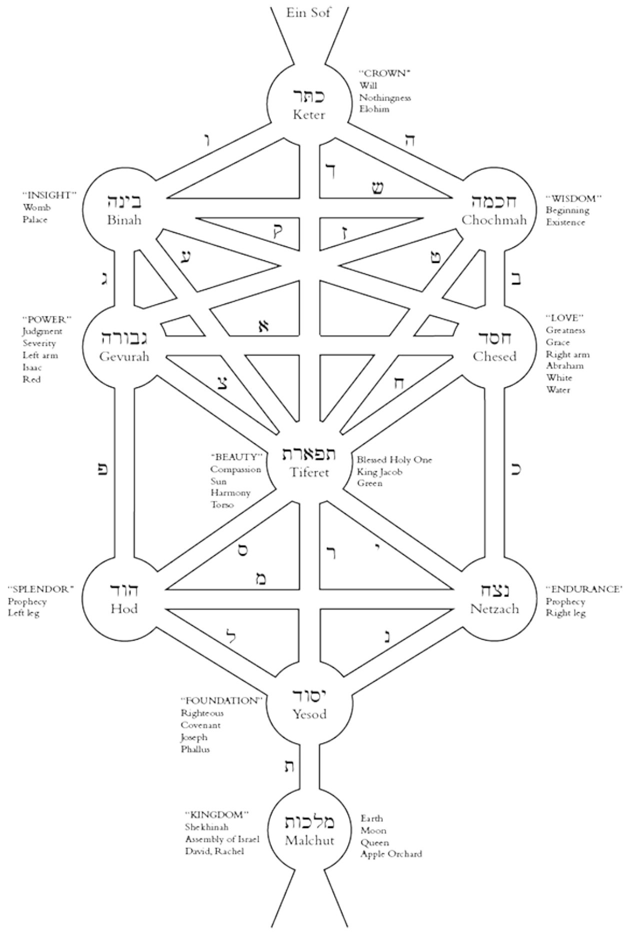
Jews continue to use the older technology of the scroll for **ritual** purposes: Scriptures, especially the **Torah**, continue to be preserved in hand-written scrolls to this day. Such scrolls are used mostly for liturgical reading.

Because of their unusual nature and the sanctity surrounding them, sifrim (pl.) can be used from time-to-time for theurgic purposes as well. It is customary, for example, to recite petitionary **prayers** for the sick while a Torah scroll is open and being read, based on the belief that God will look more favorably on a supplication offered while one is engaged in a meritorious activity. Sefer Torahs have also been used in **exorcism** and in rituals to ease a difficult **childbirth**.[1] In the latter case, the Torah scroll is unbound in the presence of the travailing woman, in the expectation that there will be a sympathetic "unbinding" of her womb.

1. Klein, *A Time to Be Born*, 114, 148.

Sefer XXXX: All books in this encyclopedia will be listed under their unique titles. Thus "Sefer Yuhasin" will be found under **Yuhasin, Sefer**.

Sefirot: (ספירות). "Numbers/Spheres." The sefirot are the ten archetypal attributes or structures of the **Godhead** manifest in the universe (SY 1:4–6). They are the "ten crowns" of God (Zohar III:70a), the emanations that link and mediate between the perfect diety and imperfect reality. The doctrine of the ten sefirot is the single most distinctive aspect of Jewish mystical speculation and forms the very heart of all Kabbalistic theosophy.[1]



Classical diagram of the sefirot

The idea of ten archetypal forces shaping creation is first alluded to in the **Midrash**:

> R. Zutra bar Tobiah said in the name of Rav: "The world was created by means of ten capacities and powers: by wisdom, by understanding, by reason, by strength, by rebuke, by might, by righteousness, by judgment, by love, and by compassion." (Gen. R. 1)

The term **sefirot** first appears in **Sefer Yetzirah** . A more detailed account can be constructed from multiple references in Sefer ha-Bahir (135; 137; 190). Later sources, seeking to ground the idea more firmly in scripture, identify 1 Chronicles, chapter 29, as the prooftext for the names of the lower seven sefirot. As **Kabbalah** developed, additional meanings have been revealed and increasingly complex designations added to each sefirah, with each later development incorporating the earlier ones.

To understand the sefirot, it is first important to understand that a distinction is made in Kabbalah between the Ein Sof, the infinite and unknowable God, and

the world, which is manifold, boundried, and comprehensible. The sefirot are the knowable qualities of God that join these two conditions. These ten knowable attributes of God serve as a bridge between the ineffable diety and the finite, definable universe (Pardes Rimmonim 32:2). This bridging process can be "mapped," and conventionally they are graphically arranged as a structure of interconnected networks, a kind of "flow chart," as we would say today. The ten sefirot—Keter, Chochmah, Binah, Gevurah, Chesed, Tiferet, Hod, Netzach, **Yesod**, and **Malchut** —are connected by twenty-two "pathways" that go both down and across the pattern. The sefirot are configured graphically so that they form "left," "right," and "center" groupings, corresponding to the "feminine," "masculine," and "harmonizing" principles within God. They also can be seen as three hierarchical triads terminating in Ein Sof at the "upper" end and the material universe at the "lower"end.

There are a few examples of the sefirot being illustrated in configurations different from the familiar "**Tree of Life** " pattern. These include concentric circles and **labyrinths** formed from nesting the first letters of each sefirah, one inside the next.

The sefirot are paradoxical, being the or (the divine **light**) but simultaneously the **speculum**, the filters which attenuate the divine light (T.Z. 17a). This attenuation of the supernal is what allows the mundane to exist. The sefirot are often equated with spatial (e.g., "palaces"), temporal (e.g., "days"), humanoid (e.g, "arm"), and personalistic (e.g., "Jacob") phenomena, though in fact they transcend all time, space, and material entities (T.Z., hakdamah 17.1) This two-dimensional stylized map of the divine attributes is, of course, simply a kind of graphic/spatial metaphor for an extra-dimensional reality. The sefirot en toto is a complex and rich image; it is simultaneously a map, a flow chart, a mandala, and a labyrinth.

Proper understanding of the sefirot and their relationship to each other not only allows the adept to understand the divine order, but also to influence divine actions through theurgic acts (Pardes Rimmonim 10:1; Cheshek Shlomo 145). The wise adept can, for example, apply the workings of the sefirot to any situation and, by introducing the appropriate complimentary sefirah quality into that situation, positively influence the outcome.[2] Kabbalists often applied the model of the sefirot to biblical narratives and practices to better understand the underlying divine dynamics present in the text.[3]

Not only have the sefirot undergone multiple varied interpretations, the schema of sefirot also exists alongside several other models of divine **emanation**, most

notably the concept of the **four worlds of emanation** and the Lurianic models of **Partzufim** (“[Divine] Countenances”). Later Kabbalists synthesize and harmonize these models.

1. B. Holtz, ed., *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts* (New York: Summit, 1985), 318–27.

2. Idel, *Hasidism*, 66. Also see I. Twersky and B. Septimus, *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 369.

3. Green, *Guide to the Zohar*, 28–59; Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 39–46.

Segulah or Segulot: (סגולה). “[Concealed] Treasure.” A medical remedy; a charm, folk remedy, or potion, often made of herbal/homeopathic ingredients. The **Hebrew** word itself has the connotation of something with a hidden or occult benefit. The practice of using segulot is most closely linked to the **healing**figure of the **Baal Shem** and with **Chasidism**.

A complex example of a Chasidic segulah would be one intended to overcome infertility. It might involve multiple elements: a combination of incantation **prayer** (usually from the **psalms**), intercessory prayer, propitious times for copulation, dietary changes (fish and garlic are held to enhance both **semen** and ardor), “psychological” advice to improve harmony between the couple, and a suitable **amulets**.[1] Examples of a segulah amulet could include an object handled by a **rebbe**, a written note (containing the segulah instructions), an etrog left over from **Sukkot**, or **oil** used for Chanukah celebrations.

1. Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors*, 136, 147.

Segulot, Sefer: “Treasure/Charm Book.” A general term for any manual of practical **Kabbalah** emphasizing methods of magical **healing**, **divination**, and/or **amulets** making. The term is usually applied to works composed from the 17th century onward.[1]

1. I. Elkes, *The BeSHT: Magician, Mystic, and Leader* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2004), 5, 25–33.

Se’ir: (שעיר). A satyr or goat **demon** mentioned in the **Torah** (Lev. 17:7; Isa. 13:21) that lurks in the **wilderness** and in ruins.

Semen: (זרע/Zera, also mayim; onah). With few exceptions, the **Bible** and rabbinic literature gives little attention to the mechanical particulars of procreation. An emphasis on various forms of “erotic theology,” however, is a prominent feature of mystical systems, both Eastern (Tantric Hinduism; Taoism) and Western (Bernard of Clairvaux; John of the Cross). This can be seen in Judaism by how its mystics regard the processes of human union and procreation

as corresponding to the divine processes that unfold within the **Godhead**.[1] Thus, when they speak of the upper and lower "waters" that must unite in order to energize and sustain the universe, the mystics are euphemistically describing the constant spiritual "insemination" that occurs between the masculine and feminine aspects of God, the yichud Kedusha Baruch Hu u'Shekhinto ("union between the Holy Blessed One and His Shekhinah") (**Bahir** 51, 86; Zohar I:17b–18a; Sefer ha-Hezyonot, 212–17).[2]

Jewish mystical practice allows the mystic to participate in this process in various ways. Some Kabbalists teach that through engaging in licit intercourse here on **Earth**, we theurgically stimulate the analogous divine process on high. Others see themselves as a receptacle impregnated by divine **light** (or the Active Intellect), giving birth to new spiritual insight.[3]

In the medieval mystical-sexual manual, Igeret ha-Kodesh, the sexual union of a man and woman is "in the likeness of **heaven** and earth." Human semen is envisioned as the vehicle through which divine energy is transferred into new life, creating a permanent umbilicus between the individual and the higher realms through which the divine light continuously flows. *SEE* MARRIAGE; NOCTURNAL EMISSION; PHALLUS; SEX; ZIVVUGA KADISHA.

1. Idel, "Sexual Metaphors and Praxis in Kabbalah," 207, 210.

2. Schwartz, *Tree of Souls*, 104–5.

3. Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, 190–203.

Serach bat Asher: This daughter (or stepdaughter) of the biblical **Patriarch** Asher lived through the entire four hundred years of enslavement in **Egypt**, from the time of **Joseph** until the generation of the **Exodus**, and beyond; a beloved figure in rabbinic storytelling, she appears and reappears across Jewish sacred history, a sort of personification of Jewish **memory** (Gen. 46:17; Num. 26:46; Ex. R. 5:13; Num. R. 20:19).

A master of the harp, she revealed to **Jacob** that his son Joseph was still alive through song to soften the shock (Mid. Avot; Sefer Yashar). She was a prophetess who foretold the major events of the Exodus, from the coming of **Moses** to the location of Joseph's **bones**:

> It is related that Serach, daughter of Asher, was a survivor of that generation. Moses went to her and asked, "Dost thou know where Joseph is buried?" She answered him, "The Egyptians made a metal coffin for him which they fixed in the river Nile so that its waters should be blessed." Moses went and stood on the bank of the Nile and exclaimed, "Joseph, Joseph! The time has arrived

> which the Blessed Holy One, swore: I will deliver you, and the oath which thou didst impose upon the Israelite has reached [the time of fulfillment].” Immediately Joseph’s coffin floated [on the surface]. (Sot. 13a. Also see PdRK II:12; Num. R. 5:13; PR 17:5; PdRE 48; MdRI BeShallach 1)

She is mentioned again as the “wise woman” who protects the town of Avel in the time of King **David** (2 Sam. 20; Eccl. R. 7:11; Mid. Sam. 32; Gen. R. 94:9).

She is one of the select few, along with **Elijah** and **Enoch**, who was translated to **heaven** without dying, because **Jacob** blessed her with eternal life for informing him that Joseph was alive (Targum Yonatan, Vayigash; Me’am Loez, Yalkut 2:267). There she governs one of the heavenly **palaces** (Zohar III:167b). Like Elijah, she continues to make earthly visitations (PdRK 11:12). A tradition among Persian Jews holds that Serach lived until the 12th century CE, but finally did die. Her tomb there is a pilgrimage destination.

Seraf or Serafim: (שרף/Saraf; Serafim). “Fiery Ones.” A class of **angels** first described in the apocalypse experienced by **Isaiah** in the **Temple** (Isa. 6). There are four seraphim, corresponding to the four winds. The appearance of the Seraf is truly awesome. It has six wings, sixteen faces, and is the height of all seven heavens combined.

Serafim are born anew each day, rising from the river of Light that flows from under the **Throne of Glory** (Sefer **Hechalot**). According to **I Enoch**, they are serpent-like. The **Talmud** counts **Michael** among the Serafim:



Seraf on the Jerusalem YMCA, by permission of the Israel National Archive and Government Press Office

R. Eleazar b. Abina said furthermore: Greater is [the power] ascribed to Michael than that ascribed to Gabriel. For of Michael it is written: Then flew unto me one of the Seraphim, whereas of Gabriel it is written: The man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly in a flight … [one "flap" vs. two "flaps"]. How do you know that this [word] "one" means Michael?—R. Johanan says: By a word association; "one." Here it is written: Then flew unto me one of the Seraphim; and in another place it is written: But, behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me. (Ber. 4b)

The **Zohar** contains a section on angels, probably a **Hechalot** text inserted into the teachings on creation, which briefly discusses serafim.

Serpent: (נחש/**Nachash**). The serpent, or snake, is a symbol of cunning, **evil**, and **healing**. There are a number of mythic serpents in Jewish tradition: the creature that tempts **Eve** and the cosmic monsters, **Leviathan**, Rahav, and Tanin'iver. Often destructive **angels**, like **Samael** and **Satan**, will appear on **Earth** in the guise of a serpent or **dragon** (*Zohar*; *Emek ha-Melech* 84b–84c).

The most famous such incident is the serpent in the **Garden of Eden**. In one aggadah, Samael takes the form of the serpent and as such he physically seduced Eve, impregnating her with demonic seed. This accounts for **Cain** and the generations of increasingly degenerate people leading up to **the Flood**. In the **Zohar**, the serpent is a mythic representation of false gnosis, of misapprehension of the **Godhead** (I:83a). Interestingly, Zohar also gives one of the few positive images of a serpent found in Jewish tradition by teaching that there are two cosmic serpents, the "serpent of the death of the world" and "the serpent of life" that accompanies each person (*Zohar* I:52a; *T.Z.* 43a). Seeing a serpent in a **dream** is a good **omen**.

Earthly, yet still numinous, serpents appear in the **Bible**: **Moses** uses snakes in his preliminary bout with the sorcerers of **Egypt**. By way of explaining the mysterious incident of the spiritual attack on Moses as he traveled to Egypt (Ex. 4:20–26), a rabbinic tradition explains that Satan in the shape of a serpent attacked Moses in order to prevent him from fulfilling his mission. The serpent swallowed him from his head to his penis, but could not swallow "the sign of the covenant." Seeing this, his wife **Zipporah** immediately circumcised their son and cast the **blood** and foreskin on the serpent. Like a **vampire** splattered by holy water, Satan immediately spit Moses out and retreated (*Ned*. 32a; *BhM* 1:43).

Equally cryptic is the incident in the book of Numbers where the people find themselves being bitten by fiery snakes. To combat this, God commands Moses to make a bronze image of a serpent. Whoever gazes on it is healed. This image, known as Nehushtan, was part of the **Temple** furnishings until King Hezekiah destroyed it. In an oft-repeated rabbinic wonder-story about Chanina ben Dosa, we learn that the **Righteous** who **study** Torah are both oblivious to and invulnerable to the deadliest of snakes.

Poisonous snakes, the aggadah assures us, can be used by **heaven** as punishing emissaries. In one story, Rabbi Eleazar stops and turns away a snake that was on

its way to bite a Jew who had since repented (ZCh 107a–108a). The snake went off and slew a gentile thief instead.

In the Middle Ages, the starry belt of the Milky Way became known as Teli, the heavenly Dragon, because of its serpentine appearance.

Seudah Sh'lishit: (סעודה שלישית). "Third Meal." A meal eaten at the conclusion of the **Sabbath**. The obligation to eat three meals over the course of Shabbat is derived from the TaNaKH and elaborated upon in later Jewish **law** (Shab. 117b; SA Orah Chayyim 291). **eating** three meals, it is taught, shields the practitioner from the travails of the **Messiah**'s coming, the messianic wars, and punishment in **Gehenna** (Shab. 118a).

Customarily a light meal of **bread** , salad, and **fish** are eaten and **psalms** and piyut are sung (Ps. 23, for example, and the mystical poem Yedid Nefesh). The classical **Kabbalah** (Zohar III:88a) develops mystical rationale for this custom and turned this previously personal obligation into a public event where esoteric teachings are to be revealed:

> Those who penetrate the secrets of the divine are permitted at this meal to reveal the secrets of the Torah to those who are God-fearing and those who delve into His name, without fear … (Hemdat Yamim, I)[1]

Hasidism expands this further:

> This meal corresponds to Jacob [the most perfect of the three patriarchs] … his meal contains the essence of the spiritual purpose [to mend the cosmos]. (Mishmeret Shalom 29:2)

It is therefore an opportune time for devekut (cleaving to God). The tradition also views Seudah Sh'lishit as the time to say farewell to the "extra-soul" of Shabbat (Keter Shem Tov 2:21). It is a foretaste of **Death** (the "dying" of Shabbat), so it is a time of profound proximity to God. Extending the length of the meal helps those **souls**already suffering in **Gehenna** and gains future forgiveness in the **World to Come** for the living participant (Shab. 118a). Keenly observed in **Chasidism**, the meal entails Torah discourses, food, and ecstatic song and dancing. *SEE* HAVDALAH; MELAVEH MALCHAH.

1. Rabinowicz, *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, 439.

Seven: *SEE* NUMBER.

Seven Heavens: *SEE* HEAVEN.

Seven Levels of Earth: In a somewhat confusing tradition, the **world** is made up of seven levels, six of them underworlds. They are, in ascending order:

Erez: Land of the **abyss**, **chaos**, **sea**, and **water**

Adamah: The **glory** of God within the earth (Isa. 6:6)

Arka: The plane of **Gehenna**

Yabashah: The source of springs and aquifers

Tevel: Inhabited by 365 species [monsters]

Heled: Our earthly plane.
(S of S R. 6:4; BhM II:32–33; T.Z. 76b; LOTJ I:15)

Seven Primordial Things: According to Talmud Pesachim 54a, seven things were created prior to the world: the **Torah**, Repentance, the **Garden of Eden**, **Gehenna**, the **Throne of Glory**, the **Temple**, and the name of the **Messiah**. *SEE* CREATION; SIX PRIMORDIAL THINGS

Seven Qualities: Seven reified qualities stand in attendance around God's **Throne of Glory**: faithfulness, righteousness, justice, **love**, compassion, truth, and peace (El Adon prayer; Vilna Gaon commentary on AdRN 37). *SEE* SEFIROT.

Seven Species: There are seven species of **food** mentioned in the **Bible** (Deut. 8:8) specifically symbolizing the fruitfulness of the Land of **Israel**: wheat, barley, olives, grapes, pomegranates, dates, and figs. A meonen can use them in creating illusions. Today, traditional Jews will display these **fruits** or their products in the **sukkah** and then, having soaked up the holy energy of the holiday, will use them in the following months to bring blessing and good luck (Zohar I:157b).

Seventy Faces of Torah: Every verse of **Torah** has seventy legitimate interpretations (Num. R. 13:16).

Seventy Names of God: The **Midrash** claims there are seventy names for God in the **Bible** (Num. R. 14:12). The complete list appears in Midrash ha-Gadol Genesis 46:8. *SEE* NAMES OF GOD.

Seventy Nations: *SEE* NATIONS..

Seventy Princes: Each nation has its own princely **angel** to be its advocate on high (Deut. 32:8–9; Jubilees 15:31–32; Gen. R. 56; Ex. R. 21; Lev. R. 29). *SEE*

NATIONS.

Seventy-Two: A magical number of power found in **Sefer Raziel**. The seventy-two-word name of God is one of particular power. *SEE* NAMES OF GOD; NUMBERs.

Sex: (מין/**Min;** שמוש/Shimush, also **Be'ah; Be'elah; Zuug**). Judaism endorses the central role of sex in human life. The first commandment God gives to humanity is "be fruitful and multiply." The **Talmud** views properly disciplined sex (within **marriage**, with due consideration to modesty) in a positive light. It is, in fact, a sacred obligation, even if done for pleasure rather than procreation **(**Shev. 18b; Yev. 63b).

Because of the centrality of sexuality to the human experience, esoteric practices and fantastic beliefs about sex often do appear in Jewish tradition, and can be divided into three areas: extreme practices in human sexuality, sexuality as a theurgic practice, and mystic-sexual mythology.

With regards to the first category, Jewish sectarian groups are often distinguished from more normative Judaism by their more restrictive or negative view of sex. Thus, both the Damascus Document and the **Temple** Scroll, found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, include prohibitions against having sex anywhere in **Jerusalem**, for such unclean behavior undermines the holiness of the **Temple**. The **Qumran** sect may also have required celibacy among its higher circles of initiates. Likewise, the early **Jesus**-sect espoused a more negative view of marriage and human sexuality in general (1 Cor. 7:9; Matt. 19:10–12) than did rabbinic Judaism, which advocated that one should sanctify oneself through everything that is permitted.

With regards to theurgic practice, in **merkavah mysticism** issues of **purity** in performing certain mystical-magical rites require that the adept refrain from sex for a period prior to performing such a **ritual**. Early **Kabbalah** , by contrast, actually promoted sex as its own spiritual discipline. Thus, according to Igeret ha-Kodesh, a mystical-magical sex manual purportedly written by Nachmanides, sexual intercourse between a husband and wife can be used as a vehicle for mystical **ascent**. What is more, with the proper **kavanah**, divine **light** can be drawn down into the **semen** released in coitus, imbuing it with the power to produce righteous and beautiful children. The Zohar makes sacred sexuality a central theme of its teaching, but as part of that also views sexual transgression as a cosmic affront (Zohar I:55a, 57a; II:89a–89b, 231b; III:76b).

The Safed mystics, especially **Isaac Luria**, expounded a more disengaged, somewhat joyless attitude toward sex, a point of view that undermined the more

positive attitudes of earlier sages. **Chasidism** somewhat reversed that trend, though Safed-tainted puritanical attitudes still find expression in some Orthodox sects.[1]

Most startling and shocking to contemporary Jews, steeped as we are in modernity and rationalist Jewish philosophy, is Kabbalah's mystic-sexual mythology; much of Kabbalah revels in ideas of the "sexual life" of God. Regarding human sexuality to be part and parcel of the "image of God," the Zohar divides the **sefirot** into male and female forces, and regards ensuring successful hieros gamos, the proper universe-sustaining union of these divine forces, as a major human task. This internal process within the **Godhead** is often described in the most explicit terms, with semen, vaginal lubrication, and other sexual phenomena serving as vivid metaphors for the spiritual dynamics on high.[2]

By linking conjugal desire and passion to the divine realms, Kabbalah also interprets the mystical experience of devekut as a kind of mystico-sexual event. The **Righteous** individual seeks unification with God, "arousing" a response from the Blessed Holy One in the form of an "emission" of divine effluence with its beneficent vitality that the meritorious mortal (the "female" receptacle) can then use (Degel Machaneh Ephraim 168). *SEE* PHALLUS; SEFIROT; SHEKHINAH; SONG OF SONGS; ZIVVUGA KADISHA. ZOHAR.

1. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 199–200.
2. Idel, "Sexual Metaphors and Praxis in the Kabbalah."

Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim: "Gates of Reincarnation." Treatise by **Chayyim Vital** on **reincarnation** and the metaphysics of the various components of the **soul**. Not to be confused with another book on the same topic by the same author, Sefer ha-Gilgulim.

Sha'ar ha-Kavanah la-Mekubalim ha-Rishonim: "The Gate of Intention for the Early Kabbalists." Modern name for an early medieval text on mystical **prayer** rediscovered by Gershom Scholem.

Sha'ar ha-Razim: "Gate of Mysteries." Mystical treatise on the **sefirot** by Todros Abulafia.

Sha'arei Binah: "Gates of Understanding." A 13th-century book by Eleazar ben Judah of Worms on **gematria** and the numerical codes of the **Bible**.

Sha'arei-Mavet: (שערי מות). "Gates of Death." One of the seven compartments of **Gehenna**, Maktiel is its principal **angel**.

Sha'arei Orah: "Gates of Light." The Kabbalistic-theosophical masterwork of Joseph Gikkatilla.

Sha'arei Ruach ha-Kodesh: "Gates of the Holy Spirit." A mystical tract by **Chayyim Vital** .

Sha'arei Tzalmavet: (שערי צלמות). "Gates of the Shadow of Death." A compartment of **Gehenna**. Pariel is its principal **angel** (MG).

Sha'arei Tzedek: "Gates of Righteousness." Medieval mystical autobiography of an anonymous Kabbalist, made famous by Gershom Scholem. It describes in detail the author's use and assessment of different techniques for achieving mystical union.

Shabbat: *SEE* SABBATH.

Shabbatai Tzvi: Turkish mystic and failed **Messiah** (ca. 17th century). Inspired by the teachings of Lurianic **Kabbalah** and encouraged by his disciple and publicist, Nathan of Gaza, Tzvi claimed to be the Messiah. Word of his claims reached the far ends of Europe, and a messianic panic ensued in many Jewish communities. After enjoying a brief period of phenomenal success, Tzvi's messianic career was cut short by the Ottoman Sultan, who offered him the choice of martyrdom or conversion to Islam. Tzvi chose conversion. Despite this, believers persisted in their faith, causing aftershocks in the Jewish world for decades to follow. A small sect of Shabbateanism, the Donmeh, survives to this day.

Shabbateanism: A messianic heresy of the 17th century. *SEE* SHABBATAI TZVI.

Shabriri: (שברירי). "Blindness." A **demon** that causes blindness and/or ocular **diseases** (Pes. 112a).

Shechakim: (שחקים). One of the **seven heavens**, this is the level at which **manna** is milled to feed the righteous (Chag. 12b–13a).

Shaddai, El: (אל שדי). "[God of] Mountains/Breasts." A name of God that appears mostly in the book of Genesis, probably a derivation of an Ugaritic divine name. In three places, the name is explicitly linked to **fertility**: "May El Shaddai bless

you and make you fruitful and numerous …" (Gen. 28:3). "I am El Shaddai: be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 35:11). "By El Shaddai who will bless you with blessings of **heaven** above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the **breasts** [shadiyim] and of the womb [*racham*]" (Gen. 49:25). In Zoharic **Kabbalah** , it is another name for **Shekhinah**. *SEE* NAMES OF GOD.

Shadow: (**צל/Tzel**). Jewish mystics regard the shadow as a kind of aura that can be used for the purposes of **divination**. According to the **Talmud**, anyone whose shadow lacks a head on Rosh Hashanah is destined to die within the year. Samson Bacchi claimed his teacher **Isaac Luria** could discern a person's moral condition, even history of past lives, from his or her shadow.[1] *SEE* GUF HA-DAK; TZELEM.

1. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 94.

Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego: The three companions of **Daniel** (Dan. 1:6), they were thrown into a fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar because they refused to deny the God of Israel (Dan. 3). God sent an **angel** to shield them from the fire. According to the **Midrash** (S of S R. 7:8), other **miracles** occurred coinciding with this incident. The furnace erupted out of the ground and blew to pieces. As a result of the explosion, the fiasco burned up princes from four idolatrous **nations**, half-cooked Nebuchadnezzar, and blew down his idolatrous image. At the same moment, **Ezekiel** resurrected the six hundred thousand dead Israelites lying in the valley of bones (Ezek. 37).

Shalgiel: The **angel** of snow (I Enoch).

Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah: "The Chain of Tradition." A mystical tract by R. Gedaliah ibn Yahiya (ca. 16th century). It includes accounts of spiritual **possession** and **ghosts**.

Shamanism: The practice of controlling spiritual forces through ecstatic **rituals** and magical objects for the purposes of **healing** and protection. Throughout its history, Judaism has manifested some shamanistic elements. Shamanistic-charismatic practices are evident, for example, in the case of the Ma'asei-Merkavah mystics and in some of the magical and **amulet**-making practices of Greco-Roman Jewry.[1] Occasionally such practices rise to the level of being almost universally accepted, as is the case of folk healers and rainmakers recorded in the **Talmud**. This is also true of the rise of the **Baal Shems** and the very shamanlike role of the Chasidic **rebbe**.

1. J. Davila, “The Hechalot Literature and Shamanism” Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1994), 767–89; also see G. Winkler, *Magic of the Ordinary: Recovering the Shamanic in Judaism* (Berkley, CA: North Atlantic Press, 2003).

Shamayim: “Heaven.” *SEE* SEVEN HEAVENS.

Shamir [Worm]: (שמיר). This miraculous creature, most often interpreted as a kind of worm or salamander, formed on the sixth day of **Creation**, eats stone. **Solomon** stole the Shamir from the mythical **Hoopoe** bird that guarded it, in order to use it to cut blocks for the **Temple** (Git. 68a–68b), while fulfilling God’s command that no implement of **iron** be used to construct the **altar** of God (Ex. 22):

> Our Rabbis taught: With the Shamir Solomon built the Temple, as it is said: And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready at the quarry. The words are to be understood as they are written … If that be so, why is there a text to State, There was neither hammer, nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in the building? [It means] that they prepared them outside and brought them within. Rabbi said: The statement of R. Judah is probable in connection with the stones of the Sanctuary, and the statement of R. Nehemiah in connection with [Solomon’s] house. For what purpose, then, according to R. Nehemiah, was the Shamir necessary?—It was required as taught in the following … he [the mason] writes with ink upon them [the stones waiting for their final fitting inside the sanctuary], shows the Shamir [the written strokes] on the outside, and these split of their own accord, like a fig which splits open in summer and nothing at all is lost, or like a valley which splits asunder in the rainy season and nothing at all is lost.
>
> Our Rabbis taught: The Shamir is a creature about the size of a barley-corn, and was created during the six days of Creation. No hard substance can withstand it. How is it kept? They wrap it in tufts of wool and place it in a leaden tube full of barley-bran. (Sot. 48b)

It carved the Urim and Thummim of the High **priest's** breastplate. *SEE* ANIMALS..

Shamshiel: A **fallen angel** who teaches mankind the **secrets** of the **zodiac** (I Enoch).

Shavuot: (שבועות). “Weeks.” An early summer holiday that comes forty-nine days after **Passover**, at the conclusion of the omer, which simultaneously celebrates the barley harvest and God’s giving the **Torah** on **Mount Sinai**.

The role of the holiday has been controversial at times. It was very important to the author of Jubilees (1, 6, 14, 17, 22, 32, 44, 50). For the sectarian **priests** who composed the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, **Shavuot** was the critical holiday (Damascus Document; Temple Scroll; Scroll of Priestly Courses). By comparison, the Rabbis treat it with more muted interest—it is not even mentioned by name in the Mishnah, and consequently it is the only festival that does not have a tractate devoted to it in the **Talmud**. Moreover, it is overshadowed by the attention given to the other holidays: Rosh Hashanah, **Yom Kippur**, Passover, and **Sukkot**.

Because of a rabbinic legend that the Israelites were caught sleeping when God first appeared to give the Ten Commandments, the Kabbalists instituted a penitential all-night **study** session on Shavuot, Tikkun Leil Shavuot ("Repair of the Night of Shavuot") so that God will see we are both awake for any moment when Torah is given and diligent in our devotion to its study (Zohar**,** Emor, 98a).

Shedim: (שדים). *SEE* DEMONS.

She 'lot Chalom: (שאלות חלום). "Inquiry of dreaming." Also called shailah b'hakeitz, "an awakening inquiry," it is an **incubation** technique for asking questions of God or **angels** involving a period of **purification**, usually lasting several days, and using or writing an **incantation** that includes several divine names, then followed by **sleep** . Either via a **dream** or upon awaking, the adept should receive a revelation. It is first described in the **Hechalot** literature and subsequently variations appear in Jewish communities around the world (ShB 7; Sefer he-Hezyonot).

She 'lot u-Teshuvot min ha-Shamayim: "Questions and Answers from Heaven." A book by Jacob of Marvege, in which he recorded the answers to questions of Jewish law that he received from **angels** by means of **dream incubation**.[1] *SEE* LAW AND THE PARANORMAL.

1. Idel, "On Sheelat Holam in Hasidei Ashkenaz: Sources and Influences," Materia Giudaica 10 (2005): 99–109.

Shefa: (שפע). "Overflow/Emanation." *SEE* EMANATION; FOUR WORLDS OF EMANATION; PARTZUFIM; SEFIROT.

Shekel ha-Kodesh, Sefer: "The Book of the Holy Shekel." A small mystical tract, only identified and published in the last century, written by Moses de Leon. It helps illuminate some of the teachings found in the **Zohar**.

Shekhinah: (שכינה). "Indwelling [Spirit]." That aspect of God that is close to and accessible to **Creation**. While it often simply means "the presence of God," it is more often treated as a personified hypostasis of the divine. The Shekhinah has been identified with many other supernal entities that are "projections" of God into the lower worlds: the **Holy Spirit**, the Logos (Word of God), the **glory** of God, and the **Torah**. The **German Pietist** equate the Shekhinah with the Divine Anthropos described in Shi'ur Qomah. In classical **Kabbalah** , Shekhinah is equated with both the "angel of Adonai: and the tenth sefirah of **Malchut** (*Zohar* I:66a). Often it is associated with divine **light** , through phrases like "the radiance of Shekhinah."

Often personified as a **women**, the Shekhinah appears to mortals in one of three guises: a bride in white, an elderly woman in mourning black, or as a **dove** . In one medieval text that mimics Shi'ur Qomah, her physical dimensions are given, with a single one of her handbreadths exceeding the length of the universe (*Otiyyot de Rabbi Akiva*).

The most consistent interpretation of the Shekhinah is that it is that aspect of God that eternally adheres to Knesset Yisrael, the Jewish people (Sot. 4:2). It is, in a sense, the "spirit of Israel." Thus, even when Israel went into **exile**, the Shekhinah remained with them:

> [W]herever Israel wandered in exile, the Shekhinah wandered with them." (Meg. 29a. Also see MdRI Pisha 14)

The Shekhinah became central to the metaphysics of medieval Kabbalah. Much Kabbalistic thought is devoted to the idea that because the feminine Shekhinah is separated from the masculine Holy One, the One God is, in a sense, fragmented and that the true cosmic unity has to be restored by human action. The alienation of the Shekhinah/Malchut from the masculine side of the **Godhead** and its re-coupling with the Blessed Holy One/Tiferet is the preeminent obsession of the **Zohar**:

> At the time when Israel is proclaiming the unity—the mystery contained in the Sh'ma—with a perfect intention, a light comes forth from the hidden supernal world, which divides into seventy lights, and those seventy lights into the seventy luminous branches of the Tree of Life. Then the Tree and all the other trees of the Garden of Eden emit sweet odors and praise their Lord, for at that time the Matrona [Shekhinah] prepares Herself to enter under the canopy, there to unite Herself with Her spouse [The Holy Blessed One] … to unite Himself with the Matrona. (Zohar II:133b) [1]

This alienation makes Shekhinah vulnerable to the machinations of the Sitra Achra. Such teachings drive much of the theurgic practice of the medieval mystics, especially the Lurianic Kabbalists. Thus Chasids begin the performance of many mitzvot by reciting a **kavanah** that begins, “For the sake of the unification of the Holy Blessed One with His Shekhinah …”

By the early modern era, some mystics had brought the notion of Shekhinah full circle, so that it once again becomes a Logos-like “word of God” that speaks through the adept. Solomon Alkabetz, for example, told of the personified Shekhinah serving as his **maggid**, his spirit guide.

The Zohar repeatedly equates “seeing the Shekhinah” with encountering other enlightened individuals:

> The great Rabbi Hiyya went to the masters of Mishnah to learn from them.
>
> He went to R. Shimon ben Yochai and he saw a curtain was blocking the entrance to the house. R. Hiyya was astonished and said: I will hear something from his mouth from here. He heard R. Shimon saying, “Hurry my beloved, swift as a gazelle or a young stag, to the hill of spices …” (S of S 8:14). R. Hiyya heard this and said: Exalted ones are engaged in the house and I am sitting outside! He wept. R. Shimon heard [Hiyya] and said: The Shekhinah is surely outside! (Zohar II:14a)

One mystical handbook explicitly equates seeing the Shekhinah with seeing the **Face of God**, an experience that can have fatal consequences.

1. Idel, “On Sheelat Holam in Hasidei Ashkenaz: Sources and Influences,” 99–109.

Shell: Various kinds of shells, but especially eggshells and turtle shells, have magical uses. For example, inscribed with **incantations** invoking the four rivers that flowed from **Eden**, a shell could be tied to the belly of a **women** in difficult labor to ease the **birth**.

Shem: One of the sons of **Noah** , he is the only one not cursed for “exposing the nakedness” of his father. He is the progenitor of all Asians, including the Children of Israel. He learned a number of occult arts from his father, including the use of **herbs** to counter **demon** (*Jubilees* 10, 12, 21) and **astrology** . According to rabbinic tradition, he established the first House of Study for **Torah** (even though it had yet to be given at **Mount Sinai**).

Shem, ha-: (השם). “The Name.” An euphemism used by Jews to avoid saying any one of God’s powerful names. *SEE* EXPLICIT NAME OF GOD; NAMES OF GOD; TETRAGRAMMATON

Shem ha-Kotev: (שם הכותב). "The Writing Name." *SEE* XENOGLOSSIA AND AUTOMATIC WRITING.

Shem ha-Meforash: (שם המפורש). "The Explicit Name." *SEE* EXPLICIT NAME OF GOD; TETRAGRAMMATON

Shem, Sefer ha-: *SEE* NAME, THE BOOK OF THE.

Shem Tov Katan: "The Abbreviated Good Name." (1709). A book of tikkunei tefillah (mending prayers) for the treatment of illnesses and afflictions, both natural and supernatural, written by the **Baal Shem** Binyamin Binush.

Shemchazi: An **angel** who became infatuated with the daughters of humanity, and the leader of those **watchers** who fell from **heaven** as a result. He was the angel who taught mankind the magical arts (I Enoch).

Shemirat ha-Derekh: (שמירת הדרך). "Protection of the Road." A class of protective **incantations** for wayfarers, found in medieval Ashkenazi literature.

Shemot ha-Tzadikim: A text listing the names of all the righteous **souls** from **Adam** onward. Recitation of these names grants the reader theurgic powers. *SEE* NAMES OF IMPURITY.; RIGHTEOUS, THE.

Sheol: (שאול). "Grave." The most common biblical term for the place of the afterlife (Job 3:11–19), in later rabbinic cosmology, it is one of the seven compartments of **Gehenna**, a place of pits and fiery beasts, where the **souls** of the dead are purged for their return, purified, to God:

> By two letters [**yud** and **hay**] were the two worlds created … as the hay is open beneath, this indicates that all the inhabitants of the world shall go down into Sheol. As the hay has an upward projection, after they go down they shall go up [to God]. (J. Chag. 16a) [1]

1. J. Neusner et al., *The Talmud of the Land of Israel*, vol. 20 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 52.

Shephatiah, Rabbi: Wonder-working rabbi (Italian, ca. 11th century). According to **Sefer Yuhasin**, he could teleport himself (and his horse) using divine names of power—though one wonders why he needed a horse at all, given this particular talent.

Sherayim: "Leftovers." Food, usually **bread**, which has been blessed and set aside by a righteous man is a spiritual treasure and much sought after. This custom in

its full form is almost only seen among the Chasidim. The significance of Shirayim is derived from several sources. It is consciously understood to be a leftover, based on Deuteronomy 28:5, where the word mishartekha ("your kneading bowl"—"blessed be … your kneading bowl") is interpreted to mean "your remainder."

It is also modelled on the old custom of the peyah, the corner of a field left unharvested and intended for the needy (Lev. 19; Eruv. 53b; Orah Chayyim 170:3). The spiritual potential of consuming such remainders is illustrated in this Talmudic story:

> After the meal of the day to celebrate the New Month, R. Yochanan would go to the synagogue in the morning and would collect the crumbs and eat them, saying, "May I spend my life in the next world together with those who ate here last evening." (J. M.K. 2:3. Also see Sanh. 92a)

The only component missing in the pre-Chasidic tradition is the special role of the **rebbe**. This is elaborated from another Talmudic passage which talks of a family experiencing blessing through food distributed by the head of the household (Ber. 51b). Among the Chasidim, it is eaten in the belief that their tzadik's touch is a "unification" of divine energies and he has released its holy potential (birur ha-nitzotzot). As mentioned in earlier entries, there is a belief that fit food actually contains the sparks of transmigrating **souls**. Consuming it allows them to move on and blesses the one who ate:

> The point of eating and drinking is to locate the sparks, and to locate and restore the migratory souls that are reincarnated in everything that requires tikkun. (Taamei ha-Minhagim, pt. 2:3)

> Why did God make man feel hunger and thirst? … For this reason it is said "Hungry and thirsty, their souls fainted in them" (Ps. 107:5) … so that he could raise the sparks of the divine, those souls who are "fainted" in the food (ShB 2:24) [1]

Despite this, however, some will keep it as a relic or a **segulah** charm (inspired by Ex. 23:25). Whatever its fate, it is not unusual to see a scramble by the nearest Chasidim to gain a small bit of these remnants. *SEE* FOOD.; TISH.

1. Werthheim, "Traditions and Customs in Hasidism," 386.

Sheva Zutarti: **Hechalot** text of prayers and **angel**-**summoning** adjurations.

Shevirat Ha-Kelim: *SEE* BREAKING OF THE VESSELS.

Shimmush Tehillim: "Practical Psalms." A 16th-century popular compendium of **psalms** that explains their theurgic uses.

Shimmushei Torah: A medieval theurgic text listing the supernatural feats and **healings** that can be achieved using verses from the **Torah**. **Moses** is presented as the source of these spells and formulae, having wrestled them from hostile **angels** (Otzer Midrashim).

Shimon: **Hebrew** proper name. Look for all entries under "Simon."

Shin: (ש). The twenty-first letter of the **Hebrew** alphabet. Depending on what diacritical marks are included, its vocalic value can be "sh" or "s." (When it is signifying the "s" sound, the letter is called **sin**.) The word shin literally means "tooth." It has the numeric value of three hundred. It can symbolize God (as the letter that begins "Shaddai"), the three **Patriarchs** and/or the middle three **sefirot** (because of the three prongs), but it can also symbolize falsehood [1] (Zohar I:2b, 25b).

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 207–13.

Shinui Shem: (שינוי שם). "Changing of a Name." The custom of changing one's name in the hope it will change one's fortune or **fate**. *SEE* NAMES, HEBREW.

Shi'ur Qomah: "Measurement of the Body." One of the most puzzling and disturbing texts in Jewish history, this brief document, ascribed to Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha ha-Kohen, describes the "height of the **Body**" of God, possibly inspired by the description of the masculine lover described in Song of Songs, chapter 5. God is outlined here in frankly anthropomorphic terms, with references to God's feet, thighs, neck, etc. The measurement of each limb is extravagantly enormous (often millions of miles), but exact.

Whether these **numbers** are meant to be taken as factual or as an exercise in awe-inspiring exaggeration is a matter of debate. Often the proportions are nonsensical (the divine big toe is vastly larger than the divine beard, for example). Some passages in the text suggest the author is actually cautioning readers against literalism, because midway into Shi'ur Qomah he changes the rules and values of the measurements (are we talking about a human "span" or a divine "span," which alone is equal to the size of the universe?) to the point where they cease to make sense. Likewise, several statements in the text itself suggest that any straight anthropomorphic interpretation of a term like "nose" is misleading, as "no creature can recognize it."

Shi'ur Qomah also claims that each divine limb has its own name that is inscribed on it, suggesting they are in actuality **angels**, or as a parallel to the **merkavah** mystical practice of writing **incantations** on each limb of the adept attempting to ascend into **heaven**. The text concludes by presenting this as a **secret** gnosis and that reciting this text will both protect the initiate in this world and guarantee him or hera place in the **World to Come**.

It is interesting to note that despite the exhaustive and specific measurements provided, there is no evidence that any adept has ever attempted to graphically illustrate the divine form. Later mystical readers rejected the notion that this is an actual description of God's body, instead interpreting this anthropomorphic figure to be a divine **emanation**, designating it as part of God's **glory** or labeling it something angelic, such as the Unique Cherub.[1]

1. M. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions* (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985).

Shivhei ha-BeSHT: "In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov." A collection of stories, miraculous tales, and legends that constitute the first document and primary source of information on the life of Israel ben Eliezer. There are multiple versions of the book in existence.

Shivitti: A handmade or printed **amulet**, constructed around Psalm 16:8—Shivitti Adonai l'negdi tamid ("I have placed Adonai constantly before me"). Most versions of the Shivitti include the **Tetragrammaton** surrounded by protective verses and images, especially Psalm 67, and **menorahs**.

Sh'ma: (שמע). The first word of Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One." It is recited as many as four times a day by pious Jews (morning, afternoon, evening, and bedside), as well as at any moment one anticipates **Death** or martyrdom. It is called the "watchword of Israel's faith." Lurianic ideology teaches the proper recitation creates **zivvuga**, unification between the **Partzufim** of Nukva and Zeir Anpin (Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot I:249–251). Luria himself encouraged the worshipper to imagine himself being martyred each time the Sh'ma was recited.[1] It sometimes appears on **amulets**. *SEE* SLEEP.

1. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 235–236.

Sh'neur Zalman of Laydi: Chasidic master (Russian, ca. 19th century). Sh'neur was the founder of CHaBaD, the most influential of all Chasidic groups today. He is the author of the Tanya, an influential book of mystical metaphysics.

Shofar: A simple musical instrument made from the **horns** of any kosher animal (except a cow). Shofars were heard on the **mountain** of **Sinai** when God gave the **Torah** to the Jewish people. Since then, shofars have been used for many communal and religious purposes. The shofar is sounded each Rosh Hashanah in order to confound **Satan** (R.H. 16a–b). It may be for this reason that shofars are often used as part of **exorcism** (M. R.H. 3:7) and are mentioned in some **healing rituals** (Chul. 105a). It may also be because of the combined power of its disturbing loudness and its symbolic role as a summons to God to attend to human needs (Sha'ar Ruach ha-Kodesh).

A heavenly shofar sounds from beneath the **Throne of Glory** whenever **Israel** is forgiven (**Hechalot** Rabbati). A unique shofar made from the **ram** that **Abraham** sacrificed in place of **Isaac** awaits the **Messiah**. When he comes, he will sound that particular horn, which will be heard throughout the world, heralding the final redemption (Gen. R. 56; PdRK 23).

Shoftiel: (שפטיאל). "God Is My Judge." A punishing **angel** of **Gehenna**.

Shoham Stones: The twelve stones mounted on the breastplate of the High **priest** (Sot. 36a). *SEE* BREASTPLATE; GEMSTONES.

Shor: (שור). "Bull/Taurus." The **zodiac** sign for the month of Iyar. It signifies the feminine, fitness, maturity, nighttime, and goodness.[1]

1. Erlanger, *Signs of the Times*, 41–55.

Shoresh ha-Shemot: "The Root of the Names." A Kabbalistic text written by Moses Zacuto, it provides a detailed outline for the proper construction of **amulets**.

Shoshan Yesod ha-Olam: "The Rose Foundation of the World." A medieval magical book compiled by Yosef Trisomy, it is a compendium of earlier magical traditions and sources. It exists only in manuscript form.

Shulchan Aruch: "The Arranged Table." The most influential digest of Jewish **law**, it was composed in the 16th century by the mystic/lawyer Joseph Caro. References to magical theurgic beliefs and practices are sprinkled throughout its entries, often focusing on how to protect against the **evil eye** or other forms of **witchcraft**. Its description of the protective customs surrounding funerals is a prime example of its interest in the paranormal. *SEE* LAW AND THE PARANORMAL.

Sibylline Oracles: A collection of writing from Greco-Roman antiquity with some Jewish content. The Sibyls were a series of oracular women who prophesied for their contemporaries. At least some of the messages (specifically oracles 4 and 5) were composed by Jews, probably from the Jewish community of Alexandria, Egypt.

Siddur: (סדור). "Order [of Prayer]/Prayerbook." Jews of different geographic/ethnic communities each have their own prayerbook, often referred to as a nusach (pattern, formula). These prayerbooks are identical worldwide in most of the fundamental **prayers**, but feature local variations in piyutim (post-Talmudic poetic prayers), order, and minhag (customary ways to worship). Thus, there is a Nusach Ashkenazi (Central European pattern) and a Nusach Sefardi (Spanish/Portuguese pattern). Jews who descend from these communities are expected to loyally hold to the nusach/minhag of their **ancestor**, though in practice Jews may switch because of **marriage** into a family of different roots, or because of relocating to a community where their minhag is not observed.

It was therefore a great scandal to many Jews of Eastern Europe when the newly forming Hasidic communities abandoned the Ashkenazi prayerbook in favor of the only prayerbook fully dedicated to the beliefs and metaphysics of **Kabbalah** , Nusach ha-Ari (The Lurianic Siddur), a prayerbook that fused Sefardi elements with mystical **kavvanot** (**meditations**/intentions). This siddur is attributed to **Isaac Luria**, also known as ha-Ari ha-Kodesh (the Holy Lion), a Kabbalist of mixed background himself, coming from an Ashkenazi family that had settled in **Egypt**. In fact, the Nusach ha-Ari was mostly the creation of his followers in the Middle East.

But this prayerbook crossed ethnic boundaries and soon found its way into the Ukraine, Poland, and Russia. The Maggid of Meseritch, for example, noted that according to the **Midrash**, each of the twelve tribes had their own gate in **heaven** through which their prayers entered, yet there was a thirteenth gate by which the prayers of anybody could be heard On High, and he argued the Nusach ha-Ari was that thirteenth gate.[1] Many variations of the Nusach ha-Ari eventually appeared over time, including the prayerbooks Siddur Shar'abi, Kol Yaakov, Siddur Torah Or, and Siddur Tehillat Hashem. Not surprisingly, some of these were revisions to more closely follow the European minhag. Many were also streamlined. Early versions had elaborate meditations punctuating the prayers and even featured the texts configured in symbolic patterns or arranged so as to form recognizable objects, such as faces or humanoid figures.[2] Later

publications, dense as they might be with commentaries and kabbalistic insertions, became more conventional and less imaginative in their layouts.

1. L. Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer* (Oxford, OH: Littman Library Of Jewish Civilization, 1972), 38.

2. Blumenthal, *Understanding Jewish Mysticism*, 173.

Sign: (סמן/Siman, also ot; remez). Jewish tradition has as one of its premises that God has embedded signs, harbingers of meaning, in the world (Gen. 1:14; 9:13). The notion of divination, that useful information about a course of action, or the future, or God's will can be learned from natural prodigies, or acts of chance that are impetrated to serve as signifiers (1 Sam. 14:10; 14:41–42), reflects this assumption. The magical "sigil," or emblematic symbol for a name or entity is likely derived from the Hebrew **segulah** ("property/treasure/talisman"). *SEE* **astrology** ; **divination**; **miracles**

Silence: Since words are God's first creation and it is from words that diversity (Olam ha-Dibur) unfolds, it follows that silence, which preceded the divine speech, is more primal, more akin to the higher reality of divine oneness.[1]

"For You, silence is praise, Adonai," (Psalm 65:1) serves as the locus classicus of all Jewish silent devotional practice. The **Midrash** reinforces this with the statement:

> Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: "A word is worth a sela [a small coin], but silence is worth two [sela'im]." Simeon his son used to say: "All my life I grew up among the wise, and I found nothing better for a person than silence." (Lev. R. 16:5)

Mystical texts also praise silence as an appropriate way to worship God. The great Maggid, the disciple of the **Baal Shem Tov**, even declared, "It is best to serve God by silence." The Polish Worke Chasidim were famed for their discipline of silent **meditation** and its use as a teaching tool.[2] *SEE* HEBREW.; INCANTATION; MEMRA.

1. Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 2, 271–72.

2. E. Weisel, *Somewhere, a Master* (New York: Summit Books, 1982), 176–201.

Silver: *SEE* COLOR..

Simchat Beit Hashoeva: (שמחת בית השואבה). "Joy of Water Libation." When the **Temple** stood, one of the **rituals** of the holiday of **Sukkot** would be the Water Libation or Water Drawing **ritual**. This theurgic ceremony entailed gathering a jug of **water** from the Pool of Siloam (an underground spring) and taking it up

the hillside of **Jerusalem** to the **Temple**, where it would be poured over the **altar** in a mimetic act of rainfall. As the drawn water was poured out, this incantation was recited: “Let your waters flow, I hear the voice of two friends [the drawn water calling to its source], as it is said, ‘Abyss calls to abyss in the roar of the channels’ ” (Tan. 25b).

The purpose of the ritual was to draw the underground waters of the abyss toward the surface of the **Earth**, to trigger the fructifying mingling of tellurian (subterranean/circular/feminine) and heavenly (rain/linear/masculine) waters that would allow growth in the coming season (T**.** Tan. 1:4; Tan. 10b; PdRE 23).

While the ritual in its ancient form is no longer viable without an altar, today some communities continue the party aspect of the ritual and it is an occasion for a concert, dancing, or a community program.

Simon (Shimon) bar Kochba: A 2nd-century military leader and failed **Messiah**. He was credited with superhuman powers, including extraordinary strength, the ability to catch and return catapult missiles, and the power to breathe **fire**.

Simon (Shimon) bar Yochai: Mishnaic Sage and mystic (ca. 2nd century). In the **Talmud**, he is portrayed as an awesome spiritual virtuoso. Bar Yochai performed many wondrous feats. He exorcised a **demon** that had possessed Caesar’s daughter (Me. 17a–b). In order to escape Roman persecution, Simon and his son hid in a **cave** for twelve years, living off the fruit of a carob tree that grew there miraculously for their benefit. There they sat naked, buried themselves in sand, and studied **Torah** constantly. After twelve years they emerged, only to find that the supernal power they had cultivated in that time set everything mundane they gazed at on fire. A voice from **heaven** immediately ordered them to return to the cave, where they remained for another twelve months as punishment (paralleling the traditions concerning **Gehenna**) until they were finally reconciled to the imperfection of the material world, and only then did God release them. Still, Simon had to use his powers to heal everyone his son struck down. Bar Yochai himself retained the power to slay with his gaze, but had the capacity to control it (Shab. 33b– 34a).

Rabbi Simon is the purported author of the **Zohar**, but as that document first surfaced in the 13th century, a thousand years after his death, there is controversy concerning that. Much of the Zohar is a spiritual memoir of Bar Yochai’s life and ministry, a kind of mystical gospel. The bulk of the supernatural traditions about him are found there. He learned his Torah directly from an **angel**, who studied with him from behind a **curtain** of fire (Zohar

II:14a–15a). By his word, he could fill a wadi with dinars. He performed many other **miracles**, both great and small. More compelling than that, he regularly conversed with angels, disguised spiritual entities, and other heavenly messengers. His death was a miracle unto itself, a gracious death of celestial illumination.

Simon ben Azzai: *SEE* BEN AZZAI.

Simon (Shimon) ben Halafta: Talmudic Sage and demonologist (ca. 3rd century). He learns from a conversation with the **Angel of Death** that Death has no authority over the **Righteous** (Eccl. R. 3:2).

Simon (Shimon) ben Isaac ha-Gadol: Pietist, poet, and mystic (German, ca. 11th century). Rabbi Simon taught such beliefs as the **summoning** of **angels** and their intercessory power and had communications with the angelic Baal ha-Chalom. He also expounded on the theurgic and practical power of the seventy-two letter **name of God**.

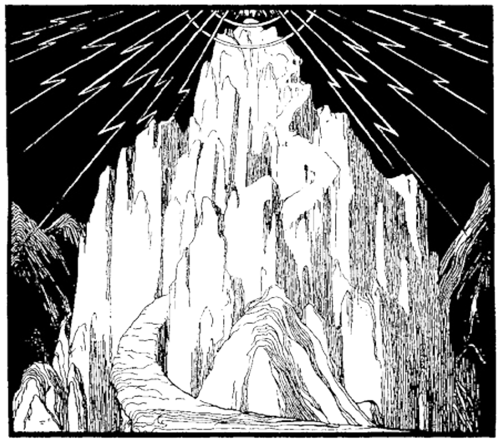
Simon ben Zoma: *SEE* BEN ZOMA, SIMON.

Sin: (חטא, חט/Chet). “Miss [a Target].” In conventional understanding, sin is any human action that violates God’s will for humanity as expressed by the 613 commandments appearing in the **Torah**. In the **Bible**, the word often carries a connotation of “inadvertent error,” of an unintentional transgression.

In Jewish **mysticism**, sin has greater cosmic import than mere human disobedience: sin ruins the harmony on high, interrupting the flow of divine energy between worlds, even causing fissures in God. The mission of the Jewish people, then, is to perfect our actions, repair (m’takein) the ruptures that are caused by sin, and so reestablish the harmony of the cosmos (Zohar I: 87b). *SEE* KELIPOT; SITRA ACHRA; TIKKUN.

Sin: (C). The letter shin of the **Hebrew** alphabet can symbolize the sound of either “sh” or “s,” depending on the diacritical mark that accompanies it. When it is signifying the “s” sound, the letter is called sin. *SEE* SHIN.

Sinai, Mount: (סיני alternately, Horeb). The great **mountain** of God (Har Elohim), where Moses brought the people **Israel** to enter into a covenant and receive the **Torah**. The events that unfolded there provide the archetypal story of theophany in Jewish tradition.



Mount Sinai by E. M. Lilien

The people witnessed God upon the top of the **mountain** in **visions** of cloud, smoke, lightning, and **fire**. They also heard shofars and the sound of God's own voice. God descended to the mountaintop accompanied by twenty-two thousand companies of **angels**. When **Moses** stood upon its peak, God lifted it up so that Moses could behold **heaven** **(**Ex. R. 28; Sot. 5a; Tanh. Tzav 16; MdRI Yitro; PdRE 41). From there he ascended to heaven (Suk. 5a; Yoma 4a; MdRI Ba-Chodesh). When the people heard God speak the first letter of the first word of the Ten Commandments, the entire population fell over dead, and had to be resurrected (Shab. 88b; Ex. R. 29:4, 29:9; PdRE 20). Other Midrashim teach that the people each heard God's voice differently, according to their particular capacity to hear (Tanh. Shemot 22; Bahir 45). Prior to the theophany, **Jacob** and **Rachel** met at its foot, and Moses encountered the burning bush on its slopes. In one rabbinic tradition, God didn't technically split the Sea of Reeds; he simply moved Sinai to the location and the people walked over the sea on its crest. To this day, no one knows its exact location in the Sinai Peninsula.

Sisera: The Canaanite general defeated by the prophetess Deborah and the chieftain Barak (Judg. 4–5) was yet another **giants** of extraordinary power: his voice was so powerful it stunned **animals** and toppled city walls. When he bathed in a **river**, he could net enough **fish** with his beard to feed his entire army. He rode into battle on a **chariot** pulled by nine hundred horses (Yalkut Judg. 43).

Sitra Achra: (סטרא אחרא). "The Other Side." The demonic realm, it is ruled by **Samael** and **Lilith**. Born out of the very process of Creation, this left side of the emanated **Godhead** is the manifestation of divine severity and wrath. Cosmic strife emerged between it and the right side, and from that strife emerged

Gehenna and the demonic. Like a controlling rod in a nuclear pile, the "**Pillar** of the Middle" of the **sefirot**—Tiferet, **Yesod**, and **Malchut** —moderates the two sides and maintains peace (Zohar I:17a). Though the Sitra Achra would, under the ideal conditions, be an attenuated expression of the divine **emanations**, it feeds upon human **sin** and transgression. The broken nature of our current existence keeps the Sitra Achra a powerful presence in Creation. Only in messianic times will it be reintegrated into a holy dimension.[1] *SEE* CREATION; EVIL; TREATISE ON THE LEFT EMANATION.; ZOHAR.

1. Fine, *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, 155–60, 248–62; Green, *Guide to the Zohar*, 116–21.

Six Primordial Things: God conceived of six entities that preceded the creation of the world and around which the universe is structured: the **Torah** (the blueprint), the **Throne of Glory** (positive existence), the **Patriarchs** (the **pillars** that support the world), **Israel** (the purpose of the world), the **Temple** (the link between worlds), and the name of the **Messiah** (redemption and final rectification of the world) (Gen. R. 1:4). *SEE* SEVEN PRIMORDIAL THINGS

Sixteen-Sided Sword of the Almighty: Also called the **Sword Of Moses.**, it is a mysterious divine power that can be adjured to protect a person from **disease**, grant happiness, or defeat even the **Angels of Death**. The existence of this power is derived from a **gematria**interpretation of Exodus 15:3, where God first wielded it in the defense of Israel. It is mentioned several times in the literature of medieval Jewry and is particularly associated with the **Passover**Seder **ritual**. This mysterious force may be the inspiration for the title of the magical handbook Sword of Moses.[1] *SEE* MAGIC

1. Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*, 137n, 137–139.

Sleep: During sleep, the **soul** leaves the **Body** and ascends to and draws renewed life from the celestial realms (Gen. R. 14:9). According to the **Zohar**, the soul makes a perilous journey each **night**, having to confront **demons** and **unclean spirits** as it navigates the **sefirot** (I:10b, 83a). **dreams** are the byproducts of these soul ascents. **Incubi**and **succubae** may also seek to molest one through dreams in order to release **nocturnal emissions** to breed more demons.

Because the Sages describe sleep as one-sixtieth **Death** and because of the increased physical and spiritual vulnerability of the sleeper, there is a protective **ritual** one may perform before going to bed, the Kriat Sh'ma al ha-Mitah (Ber. 4b; Zohar I:11a; the Siddur). One can use sleep for the purpose of **divination**. *SEE* INCUBATION; ODEH LA'EL.

Snake: *SEE* SERPENT..

Snake Charming: According to the Talmudic Sages, the control of **animals** through magical means is forbidden by the **Torah** (Sanh. 65b).

Sneeze: The first person who is described as ill is **Jacob** (Gen. 48:1). Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer was the first to fully develop this thought:

> From the day the heavens and earth were created, no man was ever ill … Rather, in any place he happened to be, whether on the way or in the market, when he sneezed his soul left through his nostrils. [So it was] until our ancestor Jacob came and prayed for mercy concerning this, saying, Blessed Holy One, do not take my soul from me until I have blessed my sons and my household; so He accepted him, as it was said, "And it came to pass after these things that one came to Joseph and said, 'Look, your father is ill.' " (PdRE 52)

Thus a sneeze, once the very act of expiration itself, comes to be understood to be an act of divine compassion, an omen that **Death** is approaching.

This is an idea very much in keeping with the idea, rooted in the **Bible** (Gen. 1:26), that the spirit enters and leaves through the nose, and that all humans are pneumatically permeable, that various spirits of **wisdom** (Exod. 28:3, 31:3), **Prophecy** (Num. 11:17, 29), and woe (1 Sam. 16:23) pass easily in and out of the **Body**, and that our very **souls** even leave us on a temporary basis while we **sleep** (the Elohai Neshamah morning **prayer**).

Of course, an omen can be averted with the proper **ritual** or words of power. And so it is that Jews came to believe it was obligatory to respond to a sneeze with a word or phrase to counteract it:

> Therefore a man is duty bound to say to his fellow who sneezes, **Chayyim** [Life!] changing death in the world into light [fulfilling the promise of Scripture] as is written, "His sneezes flash forth light." (Job 41:10. See also PdRE)

Other phrases evolved to keep the soul within the body, such as l'chayyim tovim [Hebrew], marpe, assuta [Aramaic], zu gesund [German], and gesundheit [Yiddish].

The fact that this was more than just a wish, but actually a counter spell, is made clear in arguments in the Tosefta, where some Sages worry that the **blessings** response may in fact be a "Way of the Amorites" [the Talmudic idiom

for witchcraft] (T. Shab. 7:5). Over time, this concern subsided and a blessing in response to a sneeze came to be considered mandatory.

Sod: (סוד). "Secret." One of the four methods of interpreting the **Torah**, usually assumed to be based on occult knowledge. *SEE* PARDES; SECRET.

Sod ha-Sodot: "The Secret of Secrets." A theosophical summary by Rabbi Elchanan ben Yakar of the teachings of the Circle of the Unique Cherub.

Sodei Razaya: A collection of occult teachings on Jewish **prayer** traditions by **Eleazar of Worms** (ca. 13th century).

Sodom and Gomorrah: Beyond the **sin** ascribed to them in the **Bible** (Gen. 13, 19–20; Isa. 19; Ezek. 16), numerous bizarre cruelties were credited to the Sodomites in rabbinic literature, including having laws against **hospitality** and committing the Procrustean-like crime of stretching or chopping up guests to make them fit a bed. Lot's own daughter was burned for showing kindness to strangers (*Sanh*. 109b; *PdRE* 25; *Gen. R*. 49:6).

Solar Calendar: While the normative Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar adjusted with leap months to keep aligned with the solar cycle, the sectarian **priests** of the **Dead Sea Scrolls** sect adhered to a purely solar calendar based on a 364-day year, divided into four, 13-week **seasons**. They believed this calendar was a gift of the **angels** and reflected the divine perfection of the cosmos, where it enjoyed a primordial pre-existence inscribed upon "heavenly tablets" (*Jubilees* 32; I *Enoch* 81, 93). Some sources claim it was first given to **Enoch**, others indicate it was first taught to **Moses**. *SEE* CALENDAR; ENOCH, BOOKS OF.; JUBILEES; SUN.

Solomon: Third king of ancient Israel and son of **David**. In the biblical accounts, he lives an extraordinary life, but one mostly without fantastic or supernatural elements. One exception is according to 1 Kings 3:4–15, which records how Solomon made a series of massive **sacrifices** at a shrine in Gibeon. There he had a **dream**, perhaps the result of an incubation **ritual** accompanying the sacrifices. In that dream, God offered him any gift. Solomon chose **wisdom**. In keeping with the promise of that dream, God gave him wisdom in abundance. The book 1 Kings 5:11 describes Solomon as "the wisest of all men."

Solomon subsequently demonstrated this divine gift in his role as a judge. He also built a large military establishment and the First **Temple** to God in **Jerusalem**. His **wisdom** extended to the natural sciences and he was a master in

all matters involving botany and zoology. His wisdom was such that his renown extended far beyond the borders of Israel (1 Kings 5:11).

Unfortunately, his wisdom failed him in his decision to marry a thousand foreign wives in order to cement political alliances. These women, with their foreign retinues, introduced unwelcome pagan practices back into Israelite society. Presumably, their magical and occult practices also became part of Solomon's repertoire of knowledge.

As the archetypal wisdom figure, Solomon was credited with skill and mastery of esoteric lore. Post-biblical Jewish literature amplified and expanded on this aspect of Solomon's life.

No doubt influenced by the legend of the wizard-king Pharaoh Nectanebus, who used his skills to seduce Olympia, the wife of Phillip of Macedonian and so, secretly, fathered the quasi-enchanted Alexander the Great, royal wizardry was also ascribed to Solomon, the son of David. It was a common motif for other kings of the ancient Near East, the Hebrew Scriptures styles Solomon as a patron of all forms of wisdom (1 Kings 5:11). The post-biblical work The Wisdom of Solomon elaborates on this theme:

> May God grant that I [Solomon] speak with judgment and have thought worthy of what I have received, for he is the guide even of wisdom and the corrector of the wise … For it is he who gave me unerring knowledge of what exists, to know the structure of the world and the activity of the elements; the beginning and end and middle of times, the alternations of the solstices and the changes of the seasons, the cycles of the year and the constellations of the stars, the natures of animals and the tempers of wild beasts, the powers of daemons and the reasoning of men, the varieties of plants and the virtues of roots; learned both what is secret and what is manifest … (7:15–21)

By default, "knowledge of what exists" would have included the science of magic, a standard branch of learning in the ancient world. Later writers would particularly pick out the themes of Solomon's mastery of zoology and demonology.

Not only did Solomon study **animals**, but he could actually talk with them, through the agency of a magical **ring** that he fabricated (Testament of Solomon; Tanh. B. hakadmah). The same ring gave him the power to summon and command **demon** (Eccl.2:8; **Testament of Solomon**).

In a remarkable and elaborate narrative that appears in the Talmud, Solomon enslaved Asmodeus (Belzebouel in other sources), king of demons, to help him

construct the Temple by providing Solomon with the Shamir worm, which could cut the stones without the aid of **iron** tools. Eventually, a whole army of demons assisted in the project In time, Asmodeus tricked Solomon into giving him his magical ring and then teleported the king to the end of the **Earth**, from whence he had to return to Jerusalem by begging. In the meantime, Asmodeus's shape changed and he took the king's place, thus explaining how the wisest king in history seemingly strayed from God (Git. 68a–b). According to some legends, Solomon took three years to return to his throne. In others, he actually died in humble circumstances as punishment for his sins (Yalkut 1 Kings 182; Ex. R. 52:3).

The throne of Solomon was a wonder unto itself, a reflection of the **Throne of Glory** on high. He also possessed an enormous flying carpet capable of holding forty thousand people. He had eagles that served as his personal entourage. These eagles would lift up his throne and fly him to the ends of the earth, even into **heaven** and **Gehenna** (Ruth R. 1:17; Eccl. R. 2:25; Zohar II:112b–113a).

His bevy of foreign a **marriages** also had cosmic consequences. Since their presence corrupted the Temple, God commissioned **Michael** to raise up a nemesis against Israel from the slime of the sea. This eventually grew into the city of Rome (S of S R. 1:6).

These traditions were bequeathed to the medieval world. Thus in Nachmanides's introduction to his commentary on the Torah he notes:

> [Solomon] was better versed in divination and enchanting then they [the fabled "children of the East," 1 Kings 5:10] and Solomon [also] was better versed in sorcery, which is the wisdom of Egypt.

In time, Solomon's standing as the scholarly magician par excellence came to eclipse the similar tradition regarding Moses. So that aside from the three biblical books he purportedly authored (Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes), there arose a proliferation of magical and alchemical texts presented as being in the Solomonic magical tradition: Key of Solomon, Letter of Rehoboam, and **Sefer ha-Razim**, in addition to the aforementioned **Testament of Solomon**; a veritable library of esoteric powers credited to the Israelite king. A whole array of other books, devoted to **alchemy**, metallurgy, **angelology**, and metaphysics, are also pseud-epigraphically ascribed to him.

Jewish oneiromancers teach that if Solomon appears to someone in a **dream**, the dreamer can expect **wisdom** to come to him also (Ber. 57b).

Solomon, Throne of: *SEE* THRONE OF SOLOMON.

Son(s) of God: (בן אלהים/Ben Elohim; B'nai Elohim). A term variously used to refer to **angels** (Gen. 6; Deut. 32; Ps. 82; Job 1), kings of Israel (2 Sam. 7; Ps. 2), and the Children of Israel (Ex. 4; Deut. 32).

Son of Man: (בן אדם/Ben Adam; Ben Enosh). This idiom for "human being" or "mortal" takes on the meaning of a **prophet** in Ezekiel, and then messianic overtones in the book of Daniel (7) and the Books of **Enoch**.

Sonadora: **Witch** and diviner (Turkish, ca. 16th century). This witch was repeatedly consulted by Chayyim Vital, who relied on her ability to use **lecanomancy** to divine the future (Sefer ha-Hezyonot 2).

Song of Songs, the: (שיר השירים/Shir ha-Shirim). Also called "The Song of Solomon" and "Canticles" in Christian tradition, it is a book of the **Bible**. This biblical book, along with Ezekiel 1, Genesis 1, and Isaiah 6, is the start-point for Jewish esoteric speculation derived from the Hebrew Bible.

The Sages of the 1st century debated whether this series of passionate **love** poems that never mention God should even be part of the biblical canon. The **Song of Songs** was accepted, however, on the strength of the argument that it is actually an allegory for the **love** between God and Israel. Since then, the text has been a fertile ground for mystical speculation. Rabbi Akiba and his contemporaries evidently had a whole body of mystical traditions concerning this text, starting with the claim that it was given, along with the Torah, at **Mount Sinai** (S of S R. 1). A number of interpreters understand it as the internal narrative of God's thoughts and feelings during the **Exodus**. Because of this, most Midrashim on Song of Songs attempt to make its verses correspond to specific incidents in the book of Exodus, but this far from the only interpretation of the book:

- A Love Dialogue Between God and the Community Israel: This usually assumes that the images are all related in some way to events of the Exodus (Mid. S of S) or to the entire arc of Jewish history, from Abraham to the Messiah (**Targum** S of S).
- A Dialogue Between God and the Soul: This Neoplatonic perspective is the primary focus of Isaak ibn Sahula's 13th-century commentary.
- A Dialogue Between the Torah and its Disciples: This reading is only to be found in the writings of Solomon Alkabetz (16th century).

- A Dialogue Between the Material and the Intellect: This scholastic-philosophic interpretation is exemplified in the commentary of Gersonides (14th century).
- A Dialogue Between the Feminine and Masculine Aspects of Divinity: This Kabbalistic reading evidently begins with Ezra of Gerona (13th century). The **Zohar** includes this interpretation in Zohar Hadash.

Distinct esoteric readings of select sections of Song of Songs are also legion: Shi'ur Qomah's description of the supernal **Body** of God is inspired by the Song, as is the mystical liturgical poem Shir ha-Kavod, which came out of **German Pietist** circles. It is frequently cited in the Zohar and other mystical tracts. Chapter 5 is recited over a corpse while preparing it for **burial** to invoke God's love and desire for the deceased (Taharah ritual). *SEE* ALLEGORY; GLORY, SONG OF.

Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: Also known as 4Q400– 7 and 11Q17, this **Dead Sea Scrolls** text is a kind of mystical liturgy that describes how the **priests** and **angels** worship together in the heavenly **Temple** at the **Throne of Glory**. It is built around the sectarian **solar calendar** of **Jubilees**, with the year being divided into four thirteen-week cycles, with a special liturgy for each week of that cycle. It also is one of the earliest Jewish texts to allude to the **seven heavens**.

Songs of the Sage: Also known as 4Q510–11, it is a fragmentary collection of protective **incantations** against demonic attack found in the **Dead Sea Scrolls**.

Sons of Light and Darkness: *SEE* CHILDREN OF DARKNESS; CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

Soothsayer: *SEE* DIVINATION.

Sophia: *SEE* WISDOM.

Sorcery: (כשוף/Kishuf, also Kesem; Nachshaya). A notoriously difficult term to define without giving the word a pejorative connotation, some modern scholars of the occult distinguish between "sorcery" and "**witchcraft**," arguing that the former is characteristically treated as a "technology," practicable by anyone educated in its methods. It is performed for either beneficent (**healing**, protection) or selfish (attaining wealth, **love**, or power) ends, but it is not inherently evil. Witchcraft, on the other hand, is the term applied to magical practitioners who derive their power from infernal forces and/or use that power

for malevolent purposes. By these definitions, Jews have long tolerated the practice of certain kinds of sorcery, both scholarly and shamanistic, even as they have proscribed witchcraft.

The **Bible** forbids the practice of **magic** without being very specific in describing what the offending activity entails (Deut. 18). Later authorities seek to clarify exactly what kinds of behaviors are permitted and what are not. The **Talmud** condemns those practices that involve "performance" (i.e., manipulating objects or materia magica), but permits "word magic." This seems to be one of the distinguishing features of **Hechalot** literature: in some ways it closely resembles the spells and adjurations found in pagan magical texts, yet it lacks the same elaborate use of substances, objects, or **sacrifices** found in the latter.

In a related vein, medieval Jewish authorities condemn magic (the mechanical performance of symbolic behavior with the belief that it will force something to occur, regardless of heavenly powers), but tolerate various forms of **theurgy** (invoking God, angels, and even demons, with **rituals** and words to achieve a desired end) when performed by figures otherwise recognized for their righteousness and piety. But however it is parsed out, "sorcery" in certain forms is understood to function somehow within the parameters (or at the boundaries) of Judaism.[1] While Jewish authorities regard the practice of sorcery to be dangerous and doubtful, the Christian notion that all sorcerers have allied themselves with the devil is unheard of in Jewish tradition.

Most examples of Jewish sorcery can be classified as "learned" or "scholarly" magic. It is understood to be a byproduct of mastery of other Jewish disciplines (Jewish texts, **mysticism**, or even medicine) and made possible by the moral rectitude of the adept. As a result, influential rabbis could also have the reputation of being sorcerers or theurgists. Given that a thorough Jewish education is a prerequisite for acquiring such theurgic powers,[2] Jewish adepts of sorcery were, historically, men. Still, though women were most often not in a position to gain the requisite education, they did practice kinds of folk medicine and magic that were also accepted by the community, because in theory, the use of supernal power was open to any **Righteous** person who could acquire the knowledge and skill, regardless of education.[3]

Man or woman, there are few cases before modern times of a Jew functioning as a "professional" sorcerer for the community, though the activities of Renaissance and early modern Jewish alchemists employed by gentile patrons do provide several examples of Jews working as professional adepts.

1. Dan, *The Heart and the Fountain*, 101–5.

2. J. Chajes and J. Copenhaver, “Magic and Astrology,” in *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*, P. Grendler, ed., (New York: Charles Scriber’s Sons, 1998), 21–23.

3. J. H. Chajes, “Women Leading Women (and Attentive Men): Early Modern Jewish Models of Pietistic Female Authority,” in J*ewish Religious Leadership: Image and Reality*, Jack Wertheimer, ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 2004).

Sortes/Sortilege: Any **divination** by means of drawing **lots**, casting arrows (belomancy), or randomly selecting biblical passages and interpreting the results (Bibliomancy).

Sotah: The term used for the **ritual** trial of a woman accused of adultery (Num. 5). This **ordeal** entails having her jealous husband bring her before the **priest** in the **tabernacle** or **Temple**.

Soul: (נפש - רוח - נשמה). “The dust returns to the earth; the spirit returns to God who made it” (Eccl.12:7). Despite claims to the contrary among modern Jews (and some scholars), ancient Israelites from the very beginning had a notion that some aspect of the human individual continues to exist after **Death**. It is true, however, that how Israelites, and their Jewish descendants, understood the enduring nature of the human being has varied over time.

As on so many other issues of metaphysics, the Hebrew Scriptures are vague on the nature of the **soul**, and the Jewish understanding of this mystery has had to be pieced together from diverse parts of the **Bible**. Even the word used for the “soul,” the higher consciousness and enduring aspect of human identity, varies throughout Scripture.

The Sages assert that the soul is polypsychic and identify a hierarchy of three dimensions to the human soul from three terms used in the Bible: **nefesh**, ruach, and nishama. This triad soul is the basis for virtually all Jewish metaphysics (Sha’ar Ruach ha-Kodesh 39). Only in the later varieties of **Kabbalah** does the model of the five-dimension soul promulgated.

The nefesh is the animus, the “animal vitality,” that animates all sentient creatures. In the **Zohar**, the nefesh remains bound to the **Body** and close to those who were once close to the deceased. Thus an appearance of the dead in cemeteries, **dreams**, and apparitions is a manifestation of the nefesh. The Vilna Gaon, by contrast, regards this to be the part of the soul that undergoes radical transformation in the process of **reincarnation**.

The Ruach is the “spirit,” the seat of the emotions and moral capacity, the discerning capacity that makes a human distinct from other animals. This is the

part of the soul that must undergo **Gehenna** for the poor choices it made while living, but then also gets to enjoy Gan Eden in the afterlife. In some metaphysical models, it then migrates to the Tzror ha-Chayyim, the "Treasury of Souls," from which it will be recycled into a new bodily existence until it has completed all the necessary work that soul must accomplish.

Finally, the neshamah, or "soul," is the highest self, the intellect that allows a person to apprehend God. Since this aspect of the soul is not tainted by the sins committed in this world, it is the neshamah that has an eternal afterlife. It is the interaction of these three elements that give a person his or her distinct personality.

In later mystical traditions, two more dimensions of the soul are discerned, aspects of the soul that are fully developed in only a few people: the **Chayyah** and the Yechidah. The former is that which serves as the "sixth sense," the ability to be attuned to divine forces, and the latter is the part of the soul that is the true "spark" of divinity and is capable of complete fusion with God. It is through this part of the soul that some people are able to perform **miracles** (Zohar II:94b; Keter Shem Tov, 4a; Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim 1–2; Tanya 1–2).

In **Kabbalah** , the soul is called the "fruit" of the "**Tree of Life** ," the **sefirot** (Bahir 14; Zohar I:15b, 59a–60a, 115a–b). In the Zohar, the soul is the "child" of the union of **Shekhinah** and the Holy One, and the **angels** give the soul its good and evil inclination (Zohar III:119b–120a). Later **mysticism** suggests that all souls originate from the one soul of **Adam Kadmon** (Sefer Hezyonot; Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim 1:2).

Souls begin as part of larger Shoresh Gadol, "root souls," in the guf ha-Briyot, the Treasury of Souls or in **Adam Kadmon** . Initially, souls have no gender (Gen. R. 8:1; Zohar I:85b). Every soul has an angel that teaches it the entire **Torah**. At the moment of ensoulment, the angel strikes the fetus on the upper lip, causing the soul to forget all it has learned (and making the indention under the nose), so the task of each soul is to remember the Torah it learned before **birth** (Nid. 16b) and perform every commandment perfectly (Sanh. 98a; Yev. 62a–63b; Tanh. Pekudei 3, 9; Tanh. Ki Tissa 12; Gen. R. 40:3; Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim). *SEE* ANCESTORS; TZROR HA-CHAYYIM.

South: (נגב/Negev, also D'rom). One of the four cardinal compass points, it is the direction from which **light** , **love**, and compassion emanate (Zohar I:81b).

Speculum: (ראי/Re'i; Greek: Espaklarya). This term is associated with the power of **Prophecy**, but it is not clear whether the term refers to a paranormal

phenomenon, or to a physical scrying device, such as a **mirror**. Different prophets had different access to **vision** of divinity,

> Rabbi Judah ben Ilai said, "All the prophets had a vision of God as He appeared through nine specula … but Moses saw God through one speculum." (Lev. R. 1:14)

A similar sentiment appears in the **Talmud**,

> All the prophets gazed through a speculum that does not shine, while Moses our teacher gazed through a speculum that shines." (Yev. 49b)

There are a variety of Jewish mystical and Kabbalistic speculation devoted to understanding the nature of the prophetic speculum. Some believed the term refers to the Urim and Thummim (Zohar II:234b). Others believe that an actual **mirrors** is being described; it was simply a device to avoid looking directly at the divine **glory**, which—like the gaze of a Gorgon in Greek mythology—could kill. In the **Zohar**, each of the **sefirot** is a different kind of speculum that refracts the divine **light** , transmitting it to the lower worlds (I:141a), with Tiferet being the speculum that Moses used for the full clarity of his prophetic vision. The "speculum that does not shine [i.e., only receives] is the **Shekhinah** (I:183a). Paradoxically, it is the "lesser" speculum, the Shekhinah, that is the key to correctly perceiving the other, "shining" specula (sefirot):

> "And the enlightened will shine like the splendor of the sky." This refers to those who are engaged in [the study of] Torah and contemplate words of Torah with intention and meditation of the heart. The enlightened contemplate [words of Torah] but they do not contemplate the word alone. Rather, they contemplate the place upon which the word is dependent, for there is no word that is not dependent on another supernal mystery. He finds in this word another matter of the supernal mystery. From the speculum that does not shine a person can find and see the secret of the speculum that shines … This is [the import of] "like the splendor of the sky," that is the sky which is known [that stands] upon the creatures below, for from within that sky one can contemplate that splendor that shines, the splendor of the supernal splendors, the splendor that comes forth from the supernal point, shining and sparkling with the radiance of the other lights to every side. (ZCh 105c) [1]

The **Righteous** can in turn gaze through the same sefirot and discern the future, divine intentions, and other occult truths (Perush ha-Aggadot 33).

1. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 390.

Speech: *SEE* HEBREW AND HEBREW ALPHABET; LANGUAGE.

Spitting: Spitting, essentially an act of expulsion, is a common Jewish defensive act against the **evil eye**. Most often, it is done three times in concert with reciting a protective phrase, such as **kenahora**, or with a passage of Scripture. According to the **Testament of Solomon**, spittle combined with the right **ritual** has the power to drive away **demons** . Conversely, the **Talmud** forbids spitting while reciting biblical verses, apparently assuming that the two in combination are intended to perform a magical ritual (Shev. 15b).

It is interesting to note that even as early as the 1st century, saliva was used against spiritual threats; **Jesus** of Nazareth used spit to remove a demon that caused a man to stammer (Mark 7:32–35). A similar practice is mentioned in PdRE 33.

Staff: *SEE* ROD.

Study: **Torah** study is one of the central devotional activities of Judaism, equal to worship (Avot 1:3; Shab. 127b; *Pes*. 50b). In fact, it is a form of worship. Moreover, it is like a re-experiencing of the revelation at Sinai, even to the point of having some of the visionary elements, like **fire** and heavenly voices, manifest themselves (*Lev. R*. 16:4; *B.M*. 59b). Other **miracle**s are triggered by intensive Torah study, such as creating ambulatory **trees** and destroying interfering animals (Chag. 14b; Suk. 28a; Zohar I:243a). If performed with the right **kavanah**, Torah study causes the **Shekhinah** to be restored to its place on high (Zohar I:10b).

Substitution: Substitution is the belief that one can deflect or redirect a detrimental condition or event by transferring it to a substitute object or entity. This is the logic behind folk beliefs about offering **sacrifices**, but especially the **Yom Kippur** scapegoat offering (PdRE 46). Another prime example in Jewish lore of a substitution **ritual** is **Kabbalah** , in which one ritually transfers one's **sins** to a **birds**, slaughters the bird, and then donates the meat to the poor. If one suffers a sudden foreboding about an unknown menace, one should remove oneself from the spot by four cubits and recite the phrase "The he-goat at the butcher's is fatter than I" (Meg. 3a). A person suffering a **fever** was directed to go to a crossroad, find an ant carrying a burden, collect it in a copper tube and intone "What you carry on me, that I carry on you" while shaking the tube (Shab. 66b). Medieval Jewish **segulot** include many remedies that involve affecting a substitution.[1] *SEE* REVERSAL; SYMPATHY.

1. Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors*, 121, 139–40.

Succubus: A female **demon** that enters the **dreams** of sleeping men, arouses them, and causes **nocturnal emissions** (Nishmat Chayyim 3:16). The **semen** so released is used to breed new demons, a belief that is repeatedly explored in the **Zohar** (I:19b, 55a; III:76b).

Anonymous succubae appear in Jewish literature. The most notable are the orgy of demonesses who copulated with **Adam** for 130 years:

> Rabbi Jeremia ben Eleazar said, "During those years [after their expulsion from the Garden], in which Adam, the first man, was separated from Eve, he became the father of ghouls and demons and lilin." Rabbi Meir said, "Adam, the first man, being very pious and finding that he had caused death to come into the world, sat fasting for 130 years, and separated himself from his wife for 130 years, and wore fig vines for 130 years. His fathering of evil spirits came as a result of nocturnal emissions." (Eruvim 18b; also see Tanh. Bereshit 26; Gen. R. 20:1)

Tradition identifies several succubae by name, most famously **Lilith**, Igrat, and Naaman.

Sukkah: (סכה). "Hut." This temporary structure, erected for the seven-day holiday of **Sukkot**, is a multivalent symbol. It represents the **Clouds of Glory** that shielded the Israelites during their forty-year sojourn in the **wilderness** (Suk. 11b). The sukkah occupies material and supernal space simultaneously. As one contemporary Chasidic master put it:

> "The sukkah is over our heads as the Shekhinah hovers over us like a mother over her dear children …" [1]

According to **Isaac Luria** the sukkah is a potential "frame" for the **Shekhinah**, uniting the feminine Shekhinah with the masculine divine principle of Tiferet. The sukkah is the womb which draws together Jewish **souls**>, both living and dead (Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot, drash 5).

1. J. Lewis, "The Jewish Goddess(es)," *Tel Shemesh*, 2004, accessed 2008, http://telshemesh.org/fire/the_jewish_goddesses_justin_lewis.html.

Sukkot: (סוכות). The holiday of Sukkot, which celebrates the harvest and reminds Jews of our forty-year sojourn in the **wilderness**, has a number of mystical-theurgic elements associated with it. One of the overarching themes of Sukkot during Talmudic times was to pray for the continued **fertility** of the

Earth, now that the year's harvest has been gathered. Thus Jews begin seasonal **prayers** for **rain**. While the **Temple** stood, there was a corresponding **ritual** to "draw up" the subterranean waters called the water libation ritual (Tan. 25b).

Thematically linked is the waving of the lulav, the four species. The four plants, held together in a grouping suggestive of a **phallus** , is waved in the four compass directions, up toward **heaven** (the upper waters?) and down to the earth (the lower waters?) (Zohar III:255a).

Finally, there is the famous custom of the ushpizin, inviting the ancestral **ghosts** to sit in the **sukkah** with us (Zohar III:121a).

A number of other less conspicuous occult elements are all associated with Sukkot. Perhaps because of the theme of fertility for the whole world, Sukkot is the holiday most focused on the well-being of the entire world. There were other rituals performed that were understood to benefit all humanity, such as the seventy bull offerings made, one for every **nations** in the world (Num. 29; Suk. 55b; Lam. R. 1:23; PdRK 28:9).

Sulam: (סלם). "Ladder/Staircase/Ramp." This word, which appears only once in the TaNaKH (Gen. 28:12), is the mechanism by which **angels** descend and ascend between **heaven** and **Earth**. The **Talmud** claimed it had cosmic proportions, being "8000 parasangs" wide (Chul. 91b). In the **Zohar**, it is seen as yet another synonym for the **sefirot**, specifically the **Shekhinah** which rise or falls based on human deeds (Zohar I:149a–b). R. Yehudah Ashlag named his commentary to the Zohar the Sulam.

Sulfur: A popular component in the practice of **alchemy**. It is also a materia magica used in Jewish exorcisms. *SEE* PHARMACOPOEIA.

Summoning, Angelic: In **psalm** 68:19 it is written, "You ascended on high, having taken captives …" Rabbinic tradition understands this to be referring to **Moses**, and this verse becomes the prooftext for the belief that, like Moses, mortals can summon and harness **angels** to their service. At the root of this practice of power is a tradition that the angels opposed Moses receiving the **Torah**. When God and Moses won out and the Torah was given to humanity, the angels submitted themselves to Moses, even giving him their names and revealing **incantations** that would allow him to command the angelic hosts. These spells Moses then bequeathed to the Children of Israel, and a worthy sage of the Torah can likewise command angels (*Sword of Moses*).[1]

The actual act of summoning is preceded by a long period of preparatory **purification**. Five elements are present in most mystical/magical purification practices: a set period of time (three to forty-one days), avoiding **sex** and seminal emissions (and in the case of men, avoiding women), **fasting** and **food** restrictions, **immersion**, performing certain rituals/incantations, and washing one's clothing:

> The one who binds himself by the Sar ha-Torah ("the Prince [Angel] of the Torah") should wash his clothes and his garments, and make a strict immersion. He should enter and sit for twelve days in a room or attic. He should not go out or come in. He should not eat or drink except in the evening. When he eats his bread, it should be bread from [his] clean hands. He should drink water, but not taste any kind of vegetable. He should fix this Midrash of the Sar ha-Torah in prayer three times a day, after the prayer [the Amidah prayers] that he should pray from its beginning to its end. And after that he should sit and repeat it repetitively all twelve days, days of his fasting, from morning to night, and he should not be silent. He should stand on his feet and adjure the servants by their king, and he should call twelve times to each prince. And that he should adjure them by the seal, each one of them.[2]

Besides repeatedly cleansing oneself and one's clothing in the living **waters** of **heaven** (in at least one case, the adept must be immersed in water at the time of angelic visitation), fasting or reducing the kinds of foods one eats also makes it easier to move in divine realms and/or deal with divine beings, for it makes you less human and more angelic (angels don't eat).[3]

As the purification rites draw to a close, the time has come to use the mashiva, or summoning incantation. This involves a series of repetitive commands and praises that incorporate the names of the angels and long strings of nomina barbara, apparent nonsense words that were understood to be the "language of heaven," comprehensible on high.

The combination of severe and ascetic purification rites, physical and social isolation, constant concentration, and mantra-like repetitions of incantations and divine names evidently induce a **trance** that allows the adept to commune with the angelic beings (Otzer ha-Geonim 4:2:1).

Once the angel has been successfully summoned, the texts are unclear on the exact nature of the angelic manifestation. One text states the angel will appear "like a man" and converse with the adept "lovingly." [4] Others state that one will hear a voice but see nothing, possibly meaning that the angel possesses the **Body**

of the adept, but this is never explicitly stated.[5] Often, the angel will come clothed in a **dream**. Witnessed accounts of angelic **possession** of humans do not appear before the 16th century.

There are also traditions about religious wunderkinds who could summon **animals** to do their bidding, and stories of attempts to summon the Messiah himself. *SEE* MAGGID.; MEDIUM; MESSIAH; SAR HA-TORAH.

1. M. Gaster, *The Sword of Moses* (New York: KTAV, 1971), 2.
2. Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, 193–195.
3. Ibid., 117–58.
4. Swartz, "The Book of the Great Name," 340–47.
5. Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, 85.

Sun: (**שמש/Shemesh**). The sun was widely worshipped as a god in the ancient Near East. The **Torah** expressly forbids such worship (Deut. 4), but that does not mean that Jews have not regarded the sun as a source of numinous power. The sun is generally considered a benevolent force (Mal. 3), but also has the power to harm (Ps. 121). On two occasions in the **Bible**, God alters the course of the sun: once for the benefit of **Israel** (Josh. 10) and once as a **signs** to King **Hezekiah** (2 Kings 20).

For the sectarian **priests** who authored many of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, the sun was central to their mystical-priestly ideology. In contrast to the rabbinic tradition, they observed a **solar calendar**. To them the sun signified divine constancy and **purity**.

In Hebrew magical texts such as **Sefer ha-Razim**, the influence of the sun is a matter of some interest. In certain Hebrew magical texts from Late Antiquity, Pagan sun deities, such as Helios/Sol, are subsumed into a kind of "inclusive monotheism" that demotes them to the status of **angels** but still retains their names as numinous beings subservient to the God of Israel.

The **Talmud** suggests that the sun is sentient (Ned. 39b). Rabbinic thought teaches that, like all other celestial bodies, the sun has an animating intellect or angel. The sun comes to rest in the **Garden of Eden** each **night**. It burns **red** in the morning because its light is seen through the **roses** of Eden; it burns red at sunset because it passes behind the fire of **Gehenna** (B.B. 84a). An **eclipse** of the sun signifies a bad **omen** for the non-Jewish **nations**.

The Sages teach that the sun will shine more brightly in the Messianic Era. They also promise that the sun's true supernatural power will become evident in the **World to Come**; it will heal the **Righteous** and burn up the wicked (Ned. 8b; B.B. 4a; Pes. 12a–b; Eruv. 56a). *SEE* ASTROLOGY; ZODIAC.

Suriel: (שוריאל). A Sar angel mentioned in Berachot 51a and in **Hechalot** texts. He offers advice to mortals to protect them from **demons** .

Susiel: (סוסיאל). An **angel** mentioned in **amulets**.

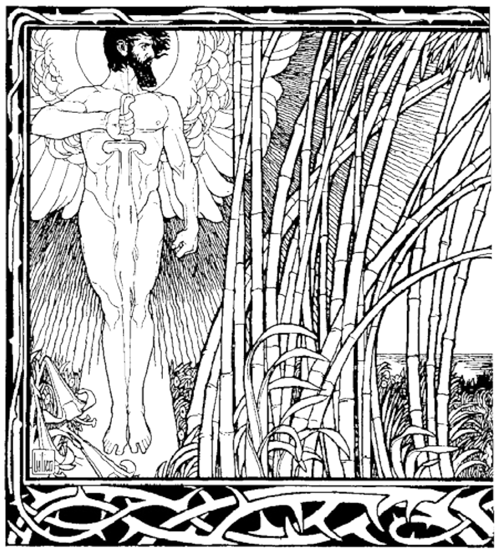
Sword: (חרב). A symbol of power, force, and punishment, God has a sword of **judgment** which is given to the **angels**; it makes its first appearance in the hands of the **cherubim** that guard the way back to **Eden** (Gen. 3). This may be the same sword that is wielded by the **Angels of Death**. Right now it "sleeps," but woe to the world should God ever awaken it (Mid. Teh. 80:3). God will use a "mighty and hard" sword, presumably this same one, to slay Leviathan at the end of time (Isa. 27:1). This "sword" is sometimes a figure of speech, referring to Divine speech (Deut. 32:41; III Enoch 32). Magical swords in the hands of humans are much rarer. It is actually the staff of **Moses** that serves as the Excalibur of Jewish folklore, though tradition indicates that passed through **Noah** 's hands, also. Nevertheless, swords inscribed with divine names wielded by humans in supernatural combat are mentioned in the **Dead Sea Scrolls** (The **Children of Light** will have such swords during the final apocalyptic battle against the **Children of Darkness**). In Midrash Abkir, Methuselah subdues **demon** changelings that torment primordial humanity with a divinely empowered vorpal blade:

> When the First Man saw that death had come upon him by the hand of Cain … he separated from the Woman and slept alone, so that a lilit that was named Piznai found him and aroused his lust with her beauty … and she bore him djinns and lilin. She bore him 92 thousand multitudes of djinns and lilin, and the first born [changling or demonoid child] of the First Man was named Agrimas. So Agrimas went and took the lilit Amarit; she bore to him 92 thousand multitudes of djinns and lilins, and the first born of Agrimas was named Avalmas. He went and took the lilit Gofrit, and she bore for him 88 thousand multitudes of djinns and lilin. The first born of Avalmas, his name was Akrimas. He went and took Afizana daughter of Piznai (an older woman?) and … [eventually] The Holy Blessed One gave over the Wicked Ones to Methuselah the righteous, who wrote the explicit name of God upon his sword and slew 900,000 in a single moment, until Agrimas, the first born of the First Man, came to him. So he stood before Methuselah and he appealed to him to receive him. And he (Agrimas) wrote and gave to him the names of the djinns and lilin and [in turn] they (the shedim) gave them

> (humans) iron to restrain [spirits] and they gave their letters in protection, so the remnant (the surviving spirits) concealed themselves in the remotest mountains and in the depths of the ocean. (Malachei Elyon 204)

This sword, inscribed with divine names, does not appear again after this (LOTJ 411). In Jewish magical practice, a sword was sometimes a compoenent in **rituals** to treat **impotence**.[1] *SEE* LANGUAGE; SIXTEEN-SIDED SWORD OF THE ALMIGHTY; WEAPONS.

1. Elkes, *The BeSHT*, 15



Cherub with flaming sword at the gate to the Garden

Sword of Moses: The Charba de Moshe is medieval manual of **theurgy**. This short book provides the most detailed description available of the **rituals** used by Jewish sorcerers to summon **angels**. The "sword" in the title is the power God gives over to mortals to fulfill "every desire." The manual begins with its theurgic philosophy, recounting how God adjured the angels to serve all humans who summon them properly, just as the angels served **Moses**. According to the text, the teaching contained in the **Sword Of Moses.** was given to Moses at the burning bush. The book describes the steps of **purification** and then gives the **incantations** that must be recited to command the angels to "adhere" to the sorcerer:

> And when you conjure him he will attach himself to you, and cause the other five Chiefs and their Chariots, and the lords that stand under them, to attach themselves to you just as they were ordered to attach themselves to Moses, son of Amram, and to attach to him all the lords that stand under them; and

> they will not tarry in their obeisance, and will not withhold from giving authority to the man who utters the conjuration over this “Sword,” its mysteries and hidden powers, its glory and might, and they will not refuse to do it, as it is the command of God X [ABDUHU] saying: “You shall not refuse to obey a mortal who conjures you, nor should you be different to him from what you were to Moses, son of Amram, when you were commanded to do so, for he is conjuring you with My Ineffable names, and you render honour to My name and not to him. If you should refuse I will burn you, for you have not honoured Me … If you wish to use this ‘Sword’ and to transmit it to the following generations, (then know) that the man who decides to use it must first free himself three days previously from accidental pollution and from everything unclean, eat and drink once every evening, and must eat the bread from a pure man or wash his hands first in salt (?), and drink only water; and no one is to know that he intends using this ‘Sword,’ as therein are the mysteries of the Universe, and they are practised only in secret, and are not communicated but to the chaste and pure. On the first day when you retire from (the world) bathe once and no more, and pray three times daily, and after each prayer recite the following Blessing: Blessed art thou [QUSIM], O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who opens the gates of the East and separates the windows of the firmament of the Orient, and gives light to the whole world and its inhabitants, with the multitude of His mercies, with His mysteries and secrets, and teaches Your people Israel Your secrets and mysteries, and has revealed unto them the ‘Sword’ used by the world; and You say unto them: If anyone is desirous of using this ‘Sword,’ by which every wish is fulfilled and every secret revealed, and every miracle, marvel, and prodigy are performed, then speak to Me in the following manner, read before Me this and that, and conjure in such and such a wise, and I will instantly be prevailed upon and be well disposed towards you, and I will give you authority over this Sword, by which to fulfill all that you desire …” [1]

Like other Hebrew magical texts, Sword of Moses is crammed with divine names, the names of hundreds of angels, and permutation mantras. The book includes an elaborate angelology, though most of the angelic names that appear in it are not names conventionally appearing in rabbinic texts. Even more peculiar is the fact that some of the angelic names are patronymic (they consist of the angel’s name and the name of the angel’s father). On the face of it, this contradicts other authoritative Jewish texts on the origins of angels.

Unlike other Hebrew magical texts that adhere more closely to rabbinic prohibitions against the methods of **sorcery** and **witchcraft**, Sword of Moses revels in rituals and activities more characteristic of Pagan magic—the use of magical materials, animal **sacrifices**, and even the consumption of **blood** from ritually impure animals. The Sword contains a fine list of the pharmalogia of medieval magic. Some of these include rose oil, eggs, live cocks, worms, grasshoppers, fingernail parings, donkey meat, dust of ant hills, olive oil, camphor oil, lion’s blood, gall, human bones, and the dura mater of a **ram's** brain, as well as various broths made from substances soaked in **water** (hemp, radishes, laurels, etc.).

Some of the powers promised to the adept who employs the power of the Sword include destroying **demons** , healing disease, freeing prisoners, stopping a ship at sea, overthrowing kings, killing enemies, communing with the dead, and having supernal secrets revealed. And of course, it offers advice on the construction of **amulets**. It is striking that at one point in the text, the author of the work felt the need to assuage more traditionally minded Jews by claiming that Moses used the Sword to combat witchcraft:

> In truth, this is the [“Sword of Moses”] with which he [Moses] accomplished his miracles and mighty deeds, and destroyed all kind of witchcraft; it had been revealed to Moses in the bush, when the great and glorious Name was delivered to him. Take care of it and it will take care of thee.

SEE SUMMONING.

1. Gaster, *The Sword of Moses*, 2–3.

Sympathy: Sympathetic influence is one of the underpinning assumptions of **magic**. Sympathetic magic is based on the metaphysical belief that divine forces are clothed in ordinary things and like affects like; that there are analogies to be made between symbolic acts and real events and that if things can be mentally associated, they can magically influence each other.

Sympathy is the basis for many forms of Jewish **divination**. **bones** are used to summon dead spirits to séances. Adepts **summoning** angels will purify themselves in **water** direct from **heaven** and then dress themselves in **white**. The shapes and patterns in **oil** on water or thrown stones, or smoke curls, or the behavior of animals, are understood to parallel events in the empirical world.

It is also the basis for cursing **rituals** such as tying or burying figurines representing enemies and for **healing** practices such as reciting a word of power backwards to reverse an illness. Sympathy is clearly the logical basis for Jewish

homeopathic remedies and remote healing (what in Latin is called similia similibus curantur, “like cures like”). Thus one 18th-century Jewish manual advised drinking a solution made from the brain of a hanged man as a treatment for epilepsy (apparently because, unarguably, hanging had quickly cured the executed man of his twitching and thrashing). Such examples of sympathetic rationales for Jewish theurgic and healing practices abound, though this is not the only way to think about the symbolic behavior found in Jewish magical traditions.[1]

Sympathy is also at work in the relationships between the higher and lower worlds. Thus when a Kabbalist wishes to effect a change in the divine **sefirot**, for example, he may opt to dress in the color of the particular sefirah he seeks to influence. *SEE* CURSE; PHARMACOPOEIA. ; SORCERY; VOODOO OR MAGICAL DOLLS.

1. Kern-Ulmer, “The Depiction of Magic in Rabbinic Texts,” 291–92; Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors*, 114–15.

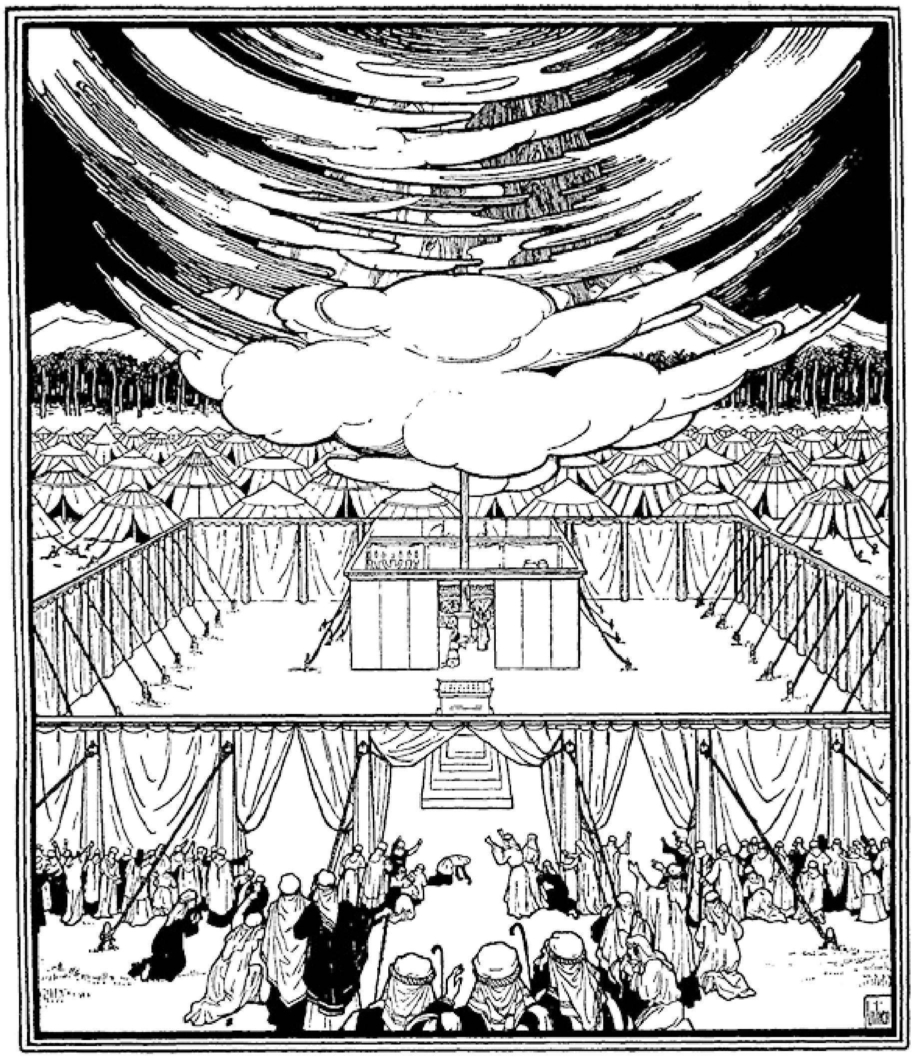
Synagogue: (בית כנסת/Beit Knesset, also Beit Midrash; Yiddish: Shul). Since Judaism does not have the concept of terra sancta, with the accompanying belief that such **Earth** provides sanctuary against **evil**, this means that synagogues are as vulnerable to demonic assault as any other place (ShB 84). Thus archaeologists have uncovered several examples of **amulets** being incorporated into synagogue walls, floors, and even placed within the **ark**.[1] At times the ark and other accoutrements and furnishings could themselves become the objects of magical or prophylactic beliefs and practices.

This is not to say synagogues have not been treated as places of numinous power. Synagogues have long served as centers of **healing**. In ancient and medieval times, this would entail the use of **segulot** (quasi-magical remedies), lechishiot (healing **incantations**), and amulet making on or around the synagogue premises (*Sword of Moses*). Though such activities may have been marginal in the eyes of Jewish authorities, there are very few opinions recorded in Jewish law objecting to such activities. This suggests that these were, at the very least, tolerated uses for the synagogue.[2] Some **golem** traditions specify that earth from a synagogue is a necessary component in making one, while others indicate the actual construction of a golem must take place within a synagogue.[3]

1. Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 14.
2. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 274–75.
3. Idel, *The Golem*, 61.

[contents]

T



Ta'anit Chalom: (תענית חלום). "Dream fast." This defensive **ritual** fast meant to avert an evil **omen** is first described in the **Talmud**. When an individual experiences an ominous dream and wishes to escape the fulfillment of the premonition, he or she should fast, usually on the day following the dream. The importance of such fasts to avoid ill omens is considered so great that some authorities permit it to even override the obligation to feast on the **Sabbath** and festivals (*Tan*. 11b; *Ber*. 31b). *SEE* DREAM; FASTING; PURITY OR PURIFICATION.

Tabernacle: (משכן/Mishkan, also Ohel Moed). The portable sanctuary built by the Israelites while they sojourned in the desert for forty years. The **Clouds of Glory** of God would descend into the tent and address the whole people through **Moses** (Ex. 40:38).

Given that the Israelites began as a seminomadic people, it should come as no surprise that a ohel ("Tent") is a significant object with metaphorical and even spiritual significance, symbolizing authority, shelter, salvation, sanctuary, and pilgrimage (Pss. 27:5, 61:4, 91:10, 104:2; Isa. 15:5, 54:2; Jer. 30:18, 35:7). Pre-Israelite Canaanites believed that their gods assembled in the sacred tent of El, the supreme god:

> She [Anat] stamped her feet and left the earth; then she headed toward El, at the source of the two rivers [Mount Zaphon] in the midst of the two seas' pools; she opened El's tent and entered the shrine of the King, Father of Time … [1]

Psalms 15:1 and 61:5 describes Israel's God in a celestial tent sitting atop a sacred **mountain**, a mythic motif in Israelite similar to the Canaanite one. Thus the idea that the God of Israel would command Moses to build a tent-sanctuary would have seemed appropriate given the cultural milieu. Still, it was novel in another regard—that God would transfer the dwelling place of divine **glory** to the **Earth** (Ex. 25–28) is a startling innovation. No longer would divinity be remote from humanity, but instead would dwell amidst people. This is an innovative notion of deity in relationship to humanity couched in mythic imagery. This also set in place the idea that the heavenly abode of divinity has an earthly analog. Its design was a **microcosm** of creation (Ex. R. 35:6; Num. R. 12:13, LOTJ 409). It was the mirror image of a supernal tent in the celestial realms:

> When the Blessed Holy One told Israel to set up the Tabernacle He intimated to the ministering angels that they also should make a Tabernacle, and when the one below was erected the other was erected on high. The latter was the tabernacle of the youth whose name was Metatron, and therein he offers up the souls of the righteous to atone for Israel in the days of their exile. The reason then why it is written ET THE TABERNACLE [the direct object marker "et" appears] because another tabernacle was erected simultaneously with it. In the same strain it says, The place, Adonai, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, the Sanctuary, Adonai, which Thy hands have established. (Ex. 15:I7) ["Place" refers to one Mishkan, "sanctuary" refers to the other.] (Num. R. 12:12)

In the erotic theology of the rabbis, it also the bridal chamber where God consummates His "union" with Israel:

> [At Sinai] Moses went forth and came to the Israelite camp and aroused the Israelites from their sleep, saying to them: Arise from your sleep, for your God desires to give you the Torah. Already the bridegroom wishes to lead the bride and to enter the bridal chamber … And the Holy Blessed One went forth to meet them like a bridegroom who goes forth to meet the bride, so the Holy One went forth to meet them and give them the Torah (Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 41) … by the words "In the day of His espousals" is meant the day He entered the Tent of Meeting; and by the words "In the day of the gladness of His heart" is meant His gladness at Israel's building of the Eternal habitation. (PdRK 1:3)

The **Mishkan** was built at the explicit instructions of God (Ex. 25). The building project was overseen by **Bezalel**, a craftsman imbued with the spirit of **wisdom** and the capacity to manipulate the Hebrew alef-bet to wondrous purposes. The structure was built out of a vast array of materials—wood; **gold**; silver; copper; clothes of blue, purple, and **red**; animal skins—given as freewill offerings by the Israelites. Its design was a microcosm of the world (Ex. R. 35:6; Num. R. 12:13). Its dimensions were based on symbolic **numbers**: sevens and tens. Besides the furnishings demanded by God, the Mishkan displayed two miraculous items: the **rod** of **Aaron** and a bowl filled with **manna**.

Divided into three zones (the enclosure, sanctuary, and devir), it housed the **Ark of the Covenant**, the tablets of the **Ten Commandments**, the main and incense altars, and the **menorah**, as well as the other sacred vessels and instruments of the sacrificial cult. The relationship of the Mishkan to the "Tent of Meeting" (Ohel Moed) also mentioned in the Torah is ambiguous. In some passages they appear to be separate structures, in others they are one and the same. Once the people settled Israel, the tent resided in various locations until **David** brought it to **Jerusalem**. Eventually, **Solomon** replaced it as the central sanctuary of the Jews by building the permanent **Temple**, a shift emblematic of the Israelite transition from pastoral-rural tribalism to urban monarchy. *SEE* CHERUB OR CHERUBIM; GOLD; OHEL; TENT OF MEETING.

1. Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 12, 95.

Tahorah: "Purity." *SEE* PURITY OR PURIFICATION

Taitazak, Joseph: Legalist and mystic (Turkish, ca. 17th century). He was the leading figure among the mystical circle in Salonika that gathered there after the expulsion of Jews from Spain. He experienced numerous revelations through a

maggidthat triggered automatic writing. He is possibly the author of Sefer ha-Meshiv.[1]

1. Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, 173–75. Also see Bilu, “Dybbuk and Maggid,” 350.

Takhlit he-Chacham: “Aim of the Wise.” A Hebrew version of a popular gentile text of astrological magic, known as Picatrix in the Latin version, Ghayat al Hakim in the Arabic, that circulated in Jewish magical circles in the Middle Ages.

Taleh: (תלה). “Ram/Aries.” **zodiac** sign for the month of Nisan, which falls in the spring. It is a symbol of **fire**, **birth**, and the masculine principle. **Passover**, which occurs during Nisan, once entailed the **sacrifice** of a **ram** for the Seder meal. Since the Sages believed the Egyptians worshipped a sheep-headed God, this act signified the slaying of the demonic principle of bondage and constriction.[1]

1. Erlanger, *Signs of the Times*, 27–40.

Talmud: (תלמוד). Second in authority and influence only to the **Bible**, the Talmud is a vast compendium of Jewish lore made up of sixty-three tractates, each devoted to a different topic. There are two versions of Talmud, created by two separate communities in Late Antiquity, the Jerusalem Talmud and the more authoritiative Babylonian Talmud. Both build upon the same core text, the Mishnah, but the commentaries in each can be quite different. Unless otherwised specified (in this work with a “J.” prefix), the word “Talmud” refers to the Babylonian work.

The arrangement of information is more associative than categorical, and it often requires the **study** of multiple tractates in order to find all relevant information on a single topic. It is made up of several strata of material, composed over the 2nd through 6th centuries.

The function of the Talmud in Jewish life is ultimately more heuristic than normative; later generations study the Talmud’s intricate debates over Jewish practice and theology for what these teach about logic, probing analysis, the mustering of evidence, and reasoning, rather than for any conclusive answers. The debates of the Sages entail competing, even contradictory, opinions on a host of subjects without reaching any definitive statement as to which opinion is the authoritative “answer.” Thus one must search later, post-Talmudic Jewish sources for anything more than the most cursory sense of how Jews actually observe the religion. With regards to Jewish beliefs, especially, the great

contribution of the Talmud is to establish a tradition of preserving and honoring dissenting opinions and a kind of nascent pluralism.



A page of the Talmud

While the major focus of the Talmud is Jewish **law**, arguing out the application of the biblical commandments to everyday life, the Talmud also overflows with aggadah, non-legal materials—stories, proverbs, medical remedies, and much more—of mythological, legendary, miraculous, fantastic, and esoteric nature.

Tamar: Judah’s Canaanite daughter-in-law, who was the daughter of Melchizedek (Gen. R. 85:10), tricked her father-in-law into sleeping with her in order to perpetuate Judah’s family line. She did so as a modest prophetess, inspired by the **Holy Spirit**. **Samael** worked to thwart her, but aided by **Gabriel**, she succeeded in her mission (Gen. 38; Gen. R. 85:9, 12; Meg. 10b). In the **Zohar** she is the pivotal figure in actively ensuring the proper transmigration of and **Tikkun** of **souls** ; she, along with **Ruth**, knowingly made the birth of **David** possible (Zohar I:188a–b; III:71b–72a).

Tannin: *SEE* DRAGON.

Tanin'iver: (תנין עור). "Blind Dragon." An evil cosmic entity, which may or may not be **Leviathan**, described in the Kabbalistic teachings of the Treatise of the Left Emanation, **Zohar**, Emek ha-Melech, and subsequent writings based on these systems. He is the "steed of" **Lilith**, the mechanism by which evil is activated, Though Tanin'iver is castrated (echoing legends about Leviathan and the **Yetzer ha-Ra.**), he is still the catalyst for the coupling of Lilith with **Samael**, a union that brings pestilence into the world until God's final intervention to slay **chaos** for all times at the end of days:

> And about this mystery it is written, And on that day the Lord with His sore and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the Slant Serpent, and Leviathan the Tortuous Serpent, and He will slay the Dragon that is in the sea (Isa. 27:1). Leviathan is the connection and the coupling between the two who have the likeness of serpents. Therefore it is doubled: the Slant Serpent corresponding to Samael, and the Tortuous Serpent corresponding to Lilith … (Pardes Rimmonim 186b) [1]

SEE DEMON; DRAGON.; SERPENT.

1. Patai, *Gates to the Old City*, 465.

Tanna de Eliyahu: *SEE* SEDER ELIYAHU.

Tanya: (תניא). Formally titled Likkutai Amarim but universally known as "Tanya" ("The Sages Taught") it is the magnum opus of Chasidic master Sh'neur Zalman of Laydi and the central text of the CHaBaD branch of **Chasidism**. Tanya is a large, sprawling fusion of medieval philosophy with Zoharic and Lurianic **Kabbalah** . It has many teachings regarding the **Pleroma**, the **soul**, and **reincarnation**, among other things. Its most radical teaching is that of "**acosmism**," that the world is an illusion (Tanya 320). Its most problematic concept is its endorsement of a kind of metaphysical racism, for it teaches that non-Jewish souls emanate from the Sitra Achra, the realm of evil, and are fundamentally different from Jewish souls (5).

Targum: (תרגום). Any translation of the Hebrew **Bible** into Aramaic. Often the translations are highly periphrastic, with explanations and occult interpretations being woven right into the verses. Targum **Song of Songs** is a classic example of this, since the mythic/Midrashic Aramaic "translation" bears only the most tenuous relationship to the plain meaning of the Hebrew original. Targum Jonathan also contains many fabulous tidbits, though all the targums incorporate popular paranormal beliefs of the times in which they were composed.

Tarot: A set of cards, modeled on playing cards, used for the purposes of **divination**. Tarot cards are a gentile invention of 14th- or 15th-century occult Italy. Despite the presence of **Hebrew** letters, including the **Tetragrammaton**, on some decks, the relationship of tarot to Jewish esotericism is largely non-existent. Rather, the letters reflect the general occult enthusiasm for **Kabbalah** that arose in Renaissance culture. Because of their interest in divination, many Jews have become devotees of tarot reading. *SEE* CHRISTIAN QABBALISTS.

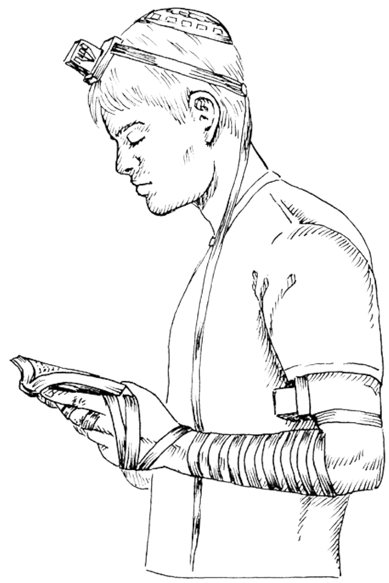
Tarshishim: (תרשישים). A class of **angels** mentioned in Seder Gan Eden and **Sefer Raziel**.

Tav: (ת). The twenty-second and last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It has the vocalic value, depending on the regional dialect, of either “th,” “t,” or “s.” Tav has the numeric value of three hundred. It symbolizes truth, perfection, and the end.[1] *SEE* HEBREW AND HEBREW ALPHABET; LANGUAGE.

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 214–20.

Tefillin: (תפלין). “Prayer [Frontlets].” Also known as phylacteries, tefillin are two leather boxes with straps containing biblical verses (Deut. 6:4, 11:13–21; Ex. 13:1–10, 11–16), which are bound to the brow and left bicep with leather straps during morning **prayers** . They are meant to be worn as an ot, a “sign” or reminder of God’s covenant with Israel. According to Talmud tractate Berachot, humans wear tefillin in imitation of God, who wears tefillin with the name “Israel” contained in them (6a).

The fact that some early post-biblical literature calls tefillin kamiaot (**amulets**) points to the idea that many perceived them as objects of protection and power. Thus, according to one legend, during a time of persecution, a rabbi wore his tefillin despite the prohibition. When officers came to arrest him, he concealed his phylacteries in his hands. When the authorities demanded to see what he was concealing, the tefillin turned into **dove** (Shab. 19a).



Wearing tefillin during prayer

Tefillin are the religious article most mentioned in **rituals** for mystical **ascent** and for **summoning angels**. Safed mystics thought that the wearing of tefillin was a prerequisite for being possessed by an **ibbur**, a beneficent spirit. Beyond the general potential for tefillin to serve as an **amulet** (Ber. 23a–b), tales of miraculous sets of tefillin also appear in Jewish literature (ShB 172). These items gain their wondrous power either because they were previously owned by a righteous person, or because they have supernal origins, like being a gift from **Elijah**.[1]

1. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 145, 158.

Teleportation: (קפיצת הדרך/Kefitzat ha-Derech). “Jumping the Way.” Physical teleportation is first mentioned in the **Midrash**, where the saintly Sage Chanina ben Dosa is instantaneously transported to **Jerusalem** by a team of **angels** (S of S R. 1:4; Eccl. R. 1:1). The **Talmud** lists three biblical figures, Eliezer, **Jacob**, and Abishai, who traversed huge distances at miraculous speeds (Sanh. 95a; Chul. 91b). There are several other accounts of angelically assisted teleportation, usually involving religious virtuosos on a particular mission, such as one involving Simon bar Yochai’s quest for an audience with Caesar in which angels progressively get Bar Yochai to Rome, past the **palace** guards, and then directly before the Emperor. Angels cease to be a part of later reports, and instead it becomes one of the wondrous talents available to the enlightened. Reports of teleportation were discussed by early medieval legal authorities. Chai ben Sherira Gaon writes about reports of a **Baal Shem** who could appear the same

day in two **synagogues** several days apart (Otzer Geonim). Two medieval **German Pietist** , Samuel he-Chasid and Judah he-Chasid, could deploy a **cloud** to transport them over long distances (Sefer ha-Peliyah). Other sources suggest teleportation is achieved by enslaving **demons** for the purpose (Biur Maamar l'Rav Chayyim Vital). Both **Isaac Luria** and **Chayyim Vital** are credited with this feat.

Teleportation accounts increase dramatically in Chasidic wonder stories. There is even an account, reminiscent of the "night journey" of Mohammed, of a horse being able to transport a rider with supernatural speed after the **Tetragrammaton** was written on each of its hooves.

Teli: (טלי). This enigmatic term first appears in **Sefer Yetzirah** (6:3, Long Recension), where it is described as being like a celestial "king on his throne." Some commentators take this to be an astronomical reference either to the constellation Draco, or to the Milky Way as a whole, or to the axis on which the celestial spheres turn. In Bahir, it is translated as "axis" and is linked to the divine **hair** (taltalim) described in **Song of Songs** chapter 5. It has also been translated as "**dragon**" and "**serpent**." Again, the assumption is that this is a in some fashion a reference to the sinuous appearance of the Milky Way galaxy. Abraham Abulafia regards it to be the dark astro-magical source of the power of Jesus (Mafteach ha-Shemot 130).

Temple: (בית המקדש/Beit ha-Mikdash, also ha-Heichal; Beit Elohim; ha-Bayit; Beit ha-Bechira). The Holy **Temple** in **Jerusalem** was one of the six (or seven) things God conceived before beginning the creation of the world:

> Six things preceded the creation of the world. Some were actually created, and others came up only in God's thought as what was to be created: Torah and the Throne of Glory were created. The [eventual] creation of the [great] ancestors, [the people] Israel, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah came to God's mind. R. Ahavah son of R. Ze'era said: So, too, repentance. And some say: Also the Garden of Eden and Gehenna. (Gen. R. 3:9)

In one of the most oft repeated ideas about the structure, here is a heavenly Temple to which the earthbound Temple corresponds:

> The place for you to dwell in, Adonai (Ex. 15:17). [The place that] corresponds to Your [existing] dwelling place. This statement hints that the throne below corresponds exactly to the throne in heaven. For it is also written, Adonai is in His holy Temple [below]; Adonai is in His heavenly

> throne [above]. (Ps. 11:4). (MdRI Shirata 10.25. Also see Tan. 5a; Ex. R. 33:4; Chag. 12b; Men. 110a; Zohar I:183b)

The site of the Temple was the Foundation Stone, the **navel** of the world. The building itself was made up of the Court (in the second Temple expansion, there were multiple courts), the Sanctuary and the **Holy of Holies**, each zone being one of more intense holiness:

> [Jerusalem is holy, but] The Temple Mount is still more holy … The hel (the administrative mall?) is still more holy … The Court of the Women is still more holy … The Court of the Israelites is still more holy … The Court of the Priests is still more holy … Between the Porch and the Altar is still more holy … The Sanctuary is still more holy, for none may enter therein with hands and feet unwashed. The Holy of Holies is still more holy, for none may enter therein save only the High Priest on the Day of Atonement at the time of the service. (M. Kel. 1.8–9)

The design of the Temple was that of a **microcosm**, a model representation of **Earth**, **heaven**, and the **Throne of Glory**(Num. R. 12:13; **War** 5:5.4). There is also a strain of Jewish tradition that metaphysically links the Temple with **Eden**.[1] The Temple instruments and objects, decorated in such floral motifs as palms, pomegranates, and almonds, were meant to evoke that "garden" association (1 Kings 6; II Chron. 3; I Enoch 29–32; Jubilees 3, 8), as were the decorative **Cherubim** (1 Kings 6, 7), known to the Israelites as the guardians of Eden (Gen. 3). The Temple is also understood to be a kind of macrocosm of the human **soul**, its three-chamber structure reflecting the three levels of the soul: **nefesh**, ruach, and neshamah.

Many wonders were associated with its building. It only rained at **night** throughout the building project, the Shamir worm cut all the stones needed for the work, the stones moved of their own accord from the quarry, and all the workers were immediately transported to the Garden of Eden upon the Temple's completion (Gen. R. 2:5; *PR* 6). According to the extracanonical **Testament of Solomon**, the great king enslaved the **demons** of the underworld to assist him in completing the sacred project.

There are a plethora of symbolic and powerful objects associated with the Temple. The **Ark of the Covenant** emanated a supernal light that illuminated the interior of the Temple (Yoma 54b; Lev. R. 20:4). The **gold menorah** at the doorway would glow when the time for morning **prayer** came (Yoma 37b). The

altar, Molten Sea, the bread of the Presence, and the **pillars** Boaz and Yachin all have mythic and, at times, occult significance.

During the entire existence of the Temple, the **rain** and wind never put out a single **sacrifice**. The **fire** of the altar was unlike any other: it was clear, yet its flames were solid; it could consume both dry and wet wood; and the smoke it produced was never affected by the wind. Instead, the movement of the smoke was a kind of continuous **omen**, and the people could divine whether the future was positive or negative based on which way it flowed (Yoma 21a–b).

God and/or other divine entities such as angels would appear in the Temple precincts. The presence of God could be experienced in auditory and/or visible manifestations (1 Kings 8:10–12; Isa. 6; Ber. 7a).

According to most of the prophets, God punished Israel for its many sins by decreeing the destruction of Solomon's Temple. God sent multiple omens to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of **Babylon**, directing him to conquer Judah (Eccl. R. 12:7; Lam. R. petichta 23). Angels even opened the city walls to the invaders (PR 26).

For the forty years preceding its destruction, **signs** of God's judgment were manifest throughout the building. Doors opened of their own accord, the Urim and Thummim did not give a positive answer, and the scarlet cord would not turn white (Yoma 39b).

At the time of the First Temple's destruction, objects of power kept there were hidden away, including the Ark of the Covenant, the anointing **oil**, a jar of **manna**, **Aaron's** rod, and the treasure of the Philistines (Hor. 12a).

When the Romans destroyed **Jerusalem** and the Second Temple, the Sages were divided on whether it, too, was a punishment sent from God, or happened for some other, more positive divine purpose. As the Romans looted the building, the High Priest fled to the rooftop. There he took the keys and cast them into **heaven**, where a supernal **hand** caught them and took them to be held until the coming of the Messiah (Tan. 29a). When Titus finally entered the sanctuary, he cut the curtain of the **Holy of Holies**, causing it to bleed. Those Temple vessels he could find he took as prizes to Rome.

As mentioned earlier, there is a heavenly Temple, which the earthly one mirrors. Even though the earthly one is gone, the angel **Michael** continues to make offerings to God in the ascendant Temple (MdRI Shirata 10; Chag. 12a; Gen. R. 1:4; Tanh. Vayakehel 7; Tanh. Pekudei 1–3; Ex. R. 33:4). The **Zohar** equates this Temple on high with Binah (I:2b).

At the End of Days, this supernal Jerusalem will descend and will rest upon the tops of the sacred **mountains** of Israel: Tabor, Carmel, Sinai, **Zion**/Moriah, and Hermon (Isa. 2:2; PdRK 21:4; Sefer Zerubbabel). In the Messianic Temple a mighty **river**, a fountain of **purity** and life, will flow from the Temple precincts, **healing** and fructifying the world (Zech. 14; Ezek. 47:1–12).

Much of early Jewish mystical practice revolved around obtaining **visions** of the heavenly Temple.[2] *SEE* ASCENT, HEAVENLY; PALACE; TABERNACLE.

1. Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 1, 51–52.

2. Berman, *The Temple: Its Symbolism and Meaning Then and Now* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995) and Elior, *The Three Temples*.

Temple Mount: *SEE* ZION.

Temple Scroll: A document found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, it is a revised version of Exodus through Deuteronomy, in which **Moses** is portrayed as mandating the agenda of the sectarian **priests** of **Qumran**, including the **solar calendar**, the organization of the **Temple**, and the **purity** of the sacred precincts and the surrounding city. It shares themes and teachings in common with I Enoch and Jubilees.

Temurah: Letter substitution. This is a popular method for revealing esoteric names of power for God. *SEE* ENCRYPTION.; HAFUCH; TZERUF/Tzerufim.

Ten Commandments: (twrbdh trç[/Eseret ha-Dibrot). The two tablets on which God inscribed the commandments were first carved from the Foundation Stone (Tanh. Kedoshim 10). When **Moses** shattered the first tablets, the letters flew back up to **heaven** (Avot 5:6; AdRN 2:11; Shab. 146a; Eruv. 54a; Deut. R. 15:17). God required Moses to make the second tablets with mortal hands, so the second stones did not have the same potent power, though the second stones were actually sapphire (PdRE 44). Surprisingly, while the Ten Commandments are a frequently cited text, they are rarely used in Jewish **rituals** of power.

Ten Lost Tribes: When the biblical northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians, the tribes that made up that nation—Simon, Levi, Gad, Dan, Naftali, Issachar, Reuben, Benjamin, Manasseh, and Ephraim—were carried off into exile. They subsequently vanished from history, but since the prophets repeatedly refer to their eventual restoration, many occult traditions about the whereabouts of the ten “lost tribes” continue to this day. In rabbinic tradition, the tribes dwell in the **east** , beyond the mythic River Sambatyon, which they cannot

cross. Periodically, individuals would appear claiming to be from one of the tribes (Sanh. 10:6; Gen. R. 73:6; PR 31).

The ten tribes have been variously identified with the Pathans, the Kurds, the Masai, the Japanese, and Native Americans. A Christian movement, the "Anglo-Israelites," have claimed that the English (and German) peoples are the tribes. The Sefardic Chief Rabbinate of modern Israel has designated the Beta Yisrael, the black Jews of Ethiopia, to be descendants of Dan.[1]

1. A. Segal, "The Ten Lost Tribes: Looking for the Remnants," *Hagshama*, World Zionist Organization Education Center. http://www.wzo.org.il.

Ten Martyrs: (עשרת הרוגי מלכות/Aseret Harugei Malchut). These ten Sages who died during Roman persecution are the archetypal martyrs. Their story is preserved in the collection known as Eleh Ezkarah ("This I Remember") and is recited every **Yom Kippur** afternoon in the **synagogue**. Many of the stories feature supernatural and miraculous elements. *SEE* AKIBA BEN JOSEPH; DECREES, DIVINE; RIGHTEOUS, THE

Ten Miracles on the Twilight of the Sixth Day: According to Avot de Rabbi Natan 5:6, ten **miracles** alluded to in the **Bible** were already preordained at **Creation** and merely awaited their appointed time to occur:

> 1) The mouth of the earth that swallowed Korach and his companions; 2) The well of Miriam; 3) The mouth on Balaam's donkey; 4) The rainbow; 5) Manna 6;) The rod of Moses; 7) The Shamir worm; 8) The supernal script on the first tablet of the Ten Commandments; 9) The divine pen for writing the script; 10) The stone tablets able to withstand the script.

Some add **demons** , the grave of **Moses**, **Abraham's** ram, and the first set of tongs (to make other tongs) (Avot 5:6).

Ten Trials of Abraham: God tested his chosen servant by ten trials. These were:

> 1) Having to leave his home as an old man; 2) Facing the famine in Canaan; 3) The taking of his wife by Pharaoh; 4) His battle with the four kings to rescue his nephew Lot; 5) The infertility of **Sarah**; 6) Accepting the command to **circumcise** himself as an old man; 7) The taking of his wife by the Philistine king; 8) Having to send away Hagar; 9) Having to send away Ishmael; 10) Having to offer his son **Isaac** for a sacrifice. (Jubilees 17:17; Avot 5:4; AdRN 33; PdRE 26–31)

Ten Utterances of Creation: The Sages teach that God created the world with ten speech-acts. These correspond with all God’s direct speech in Genesis 1–2:4 (Gen. R. 17.1; Avot 5:1; PdRE 3; Zohar III:11b). These become one of the bases for the **sefirot**.

Tent: (אוהל/*ohel*). *SEE* ADAT EL; OHEL.; TABERNACLE.; TENT OF MEETING.

Tent of Meeting: (אוהל מועד/Ohel Moed). In most passages of the **Torah**, this term appears to be a synonym for the **tabernacle**. This is what the Targum assumes:

> And when Moses entered into the Tent of Meeting to speak with him, he heard the voice of the [Holy] Spirit which spoke to him from the highest heaven, above the seat of mercy which was on the ark of witness; from between the two cherubim. And there the Word spoke to him. (Targum Jonathan, Num. 7:89)

In Exodus 33:7–11, however, the Tent seems to be a separate structure, an oracular building outside the camp. God descends upon it in a **pillar** of **cloud** and then addresses the people from its entrance (Ex. 33:9–11; Deut. 31:14–15). *SEE* ADAT EL

Teomim: (תאומים). “Twins/Gemini.” The Hebrew **zodiac** sign for the month of Sivan. It signifies unity, especially the unity of God and **Israel**, as this was the month in which the revelation at **Sinai**occurred.[1] *SEE* CALENDAR.

1. Erlanger, *Signs of the Times*, 55–69.

Terach: The father of **Abraham**, he is alternately portrayed in the **Midrash** as a noble figure and a base idolater. He was witness to several **miracles** performed on behalf of his son.

Terafim: (תרפים). Terafim were small figurines, evidently representations of either gods or **ancestor**, kept in the homes by the Semitic peoples of the ancient Near East. The etiology of the word itself is subject to debate. It may be a derivation of the Hittite tarpish, meaning “spirit,” or possibly from the Arabic raffa, “shine.” Terafim were clearly regarded to be objects of power, as illustrated by the determination of Laban to retrieve the terafim removed by his daughter **Rachel** when she departed with **Jacob** (Gen. 31:34). Scholars speculate that terafim may have been part of a complex of beliefs concerning the deified dead among the Western Semitic peoples, including the Hebrews.

The Hebrew Scriptures clearly associate terafim with mantic practices (Judg. 17:5, 18:14; Ezek. 21:26; Hos. 3:4; Zech. 10:2). The exact manner of their divinatory use is unclear, though Ezekiel 21:26 raises the possibility that arrows or other sticks may have been cast in front of the statues, I Ching fashion. The terafim had some connection to the Urim and Thummim used by the Israelite **priesthood**. Both were used for **divination**, but some speculate they resembled each other in form as well as function. There is some evidence that some terafim were made from alabaster or some other stone that would interact with light, and may be related to the luminous elmeshu stone mentioned in Mesopotamian sources.

The terafim were the butt of satirical humor in the **Bible**, such as having a menstruating woman sit on them (Gen. 31) and having Michal, the wife of **David**, use one as a decoy (1 Sam. 19:13). Such stories are intended to denigrate the spiritual value of terafim in the eyes of the reader.

In the **Zohar**, they are identified as **idols** specifically used in **witchcraft** (I:164b). According to Targum Jonathan and Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer (36), the terafim were actually enchanted talking skulls.

Tesira: A **demon** of the underworld that attacks the ritually lax after the end of the **Sabbath** (Zohar I:17b).

Testament of Abraham: *SEE* ABRAHAM, TESTAMENT OF.

Testament of Levi: *SEE* LEVI, TESTAMENT OF.



Medieval woodcut of Solomon commanding demons

Testament of Solomon: A Greek text of Late Antiquity devoted to the power of **demons** and their control, the Testament of Solomon is probably a document with Jewish roots, but has been thoroughly reworked with the addition of Christian beliefs and themes. This book provides the most comprehensive presentation of **Solomon** as arch-magi and summoner of demons. In the

narrative, he uses a magic **ring** to force thirty-six demons to help him construct the **Temple**. From each demon, he extracts its name, the nature of its malevolent activities, and the **angel** that is its nemesis. One interesting idea it contains that has some Jewish providence is that demons are the offspring of humans and **fallen angels**.

Tet: Ninth letter of the **Hebrew** alphabet, it has the vocalic value of “t” and the numeric value of nine.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 118–24.

Tetragrammaton: Greek: “The four-letter name.” י־ה־ו־ה YHVH is derived from the Hebrew stative verb ה־י־ה **hay-yud-hay,** “to be,” so it carries the sense of “The Eternal” or “[Ultimate] Being.” Also known as the “ineffable name” of God and the “explicit name” of God, it is the holiest of God’s names and the archetypal divine name of power.[1] So great was its holiness that eventually the proper pronunciation was concealed to prevent its abuse (Yoma 39b–40a). Even great Sages who misuse the name can expect dire punishments (A.Z. 17b). According to one **Midrash**, every **angel** wears a seal with the Tetragrammaton inscribed on it (PdRK 12:22). Using only the first two letters, God created both this world and the **World to Come** (PR 21). God revealed it to **Moses** while granting him his prophetic powers (Ex. 4). It was inscribed on **Aaron's** rod of power. **Solomon** inscribed it on his **ring**, giving him control of **demons** . It subsequently appears in countless tales of wonders performed by **prophets**, sages, and other men and **women** of God, as it grants virtually unlimited powers to those who know how to properly activate it (Mak. 11a; Git. 68b; PdRK 19). It is used to **summon** angels, perform **healings**, empower **amulets**, and animate **golems**. Inscribed on **weapons**, it made the bearer invulnerable (ChdM; Tar. S of S 2:17; Tanh. Bashallach 1; PdRE 47).

The name, however, is like plutonium and can be used for purposes both good and ill. In Leviticus 24, a man misuses the divine name in a **curse**, a capital offense (Lev. 24:10–16). **Lilith** used it to escape **Eden** and the reach of the angels. Jeroboam used it to animate the golden calves in his false sanctuary and so deceived the northern tribes into following him (Sot. 47a). **Jesus** used it to gain magical powers (Toldot Yeshu).

As mentioned earlier, by long-standing custom, the four-letter name of God is not pronounced. According to one tradition, the Sages would reveal the correct pronunciation of the Name only once in seven years (Kid. 71a). Based on Psalm 29—kol YHVH al ha-mayim (“the sound ‘YHVH’ is upon the water”)—**Eleazar**

of Worms taught that a master could only transmit the proper pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton to a disciple while they were both partially immersed in **water** (Sefer ha-Shem).

While in biblical and rabbinic literature the name serves as a metaphor for the presence of God on **Earth** (Ex. 24), in sefirotic metaphysics YHVH is the divine name linked with Tiferet. There is also a mystical tradition that the morphology of the letters of the Tetragrammaton are seen as a visual representation of the **sefirot**, when arranged vertically, with yud representing **Keter**, the first **hay** representing the middle sefirot, the vav signifying the lower sefirot, and the second hay symbolizing **Malchut** . Other configurations and associations are proposed in various mystical tracts, such as the idea that the first two letters signify the negative reality of God (God is "No-thing"), while the last two represent God's positive existence (Kedushat Levi, Bereshit). *SEE* ENCRYPTION; EXPLICIT NAME OF GOD; NAMES OF GOD.

1. Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, 19–31.

Tevel: One of the seven material worlds. According to Seder Gan Eden, it is where the earthly **Garden of Eden** is located. In other sources, it is one of the compartments of **Gehenna**.

Theurgy: Theurgy is a **ritual** means to both influence deity and to gain and exercise power through that deity. Rabbinic thought teaches that humanity has the power to affect change in the divine **Pleroma**, and even contribute to its well-being, empowering God through our actions (PdRK 26). Conversely, both **Midrash** and later **Kabbalah** also assert that human **sin** actually "weakens divine power" (Bahir 102; Bachya ben Asher, Commentary to Num. 14:17). By the same token, humans are able to use divine power to influence things in the lower realms. This subsidiary ability goes beyond the mere power of supplication in **prayer**; the knowledgeable Jew can, in effect, borrow God's power and use it in what we today would call a "magical" fashion.

Two things distinguish theurgy from **magic**. First, the power that the theurgist adjures is a personalistic entity—a god, **angel**, or **demon** —rather than abstract, impersonal forces, as is the case with magic. Thus, for example, **Hechalot** texts will command angels to do the work, whereas Greek magical ritual texts will simply say, "I bind so-and-so." Second, while anyone can sustain the Pleroma through prayer and ritual, for the adept to be effective in performing rituals of power on the human level, spiritual and moral excellence is required of the adept. Magic is merely a technology that anyone can be trained to use.

There are several mechanisms Jewish theurgists used to exercise this power. The most ancient is the belief that **Hebrew** letters and words, being supernatural first creations of God, are repositories of divine energy. This is all the more true of names and, especially, divine names. The adept who knows how to tap the power of words and angelic and divine names can perform mighty feats. This idea is first hinted at in the **Talmud** and further developed in **Sefer Yetzirah** . Subsequently, the theurgic power of **language** is one of the foundational assumptions of **merkavah** mystics, **amulet** makers, practical Kabbalists, and sorcerers.

The second mechanism is that the shefa, or divine influx that flows from God through the **sefirot** and animates the lower worlds, can be channeled and tapped by the Kabbalist for practical purposes. With the right knowledge, both letters and shefa can be tapped at will, much like one can use the energy of a river to drive a power plant (Pardes Rimmonim 21:2; Hesed L'Avraham 15). To use these forces, the human **soul** is the transformer, and the adept must attune his or her **Body** to these spiritual forces through Jewish rituals, **incantations** and special practices in order to use them. In some mystical-magical systems, these two theories of theurgy are fused together and harmonized (Chayyim ha-Olam ha-Ba).

In some texts the Jewish belief in the human ability to manipulate sefirotic energy also becomes conflated with yet a third mechanism: the astral-magical belief found in the Hermetic traditions that one can harness the power and influence of the stars and constellations. These gentile traditions especially emphasize the use of objects that are in some way analogous to the power being accessed, or represent the force or desired result. Thus we see throughout the Middle Ages both the correlation of angels (named entities of power) and sefirot (influx of power) with astrological symbols and the increasing use of sympathetic magic and homeopathic objects in Jewish theurgy.[1]

1. Idel, *Hasidism*, 65–69; Idel, *Kabbalah*, 165–99; Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in Classical Kabbalah*, 3.

Thirteen Attributes of Mercy: (שלוש עשרה מדות הרחמים/Shelosh-'Esreh Middot Ha-Rachamim). Based on the "revelation of the cleft" given **Moses** (Ex. 34:6),

1. יהוה *Adonai*: compassion before a person sins;
2. יהוה *Adonai*: compassion after sinning;
3. אל *El*: mighty giving to all creatures according to their need;
4. רחום *Rachum*: merciful;
5. חנון *Chanun*: gracious;

6. ארך אפים *Erech appayim*: slow to anger;
7. רב חסד *Rav chesed*: abundant in love;
8. אמת *Emet*: truth;
9. נצר חסד לאלפין *Notzer chesed laalafim*: maintaining love, even to a thousand generations;
10, נשא עון *Noseh avon*: forgiving iniquity;
11. פשע *Feshah*: [forgiving] transgression;
12. חטאה *Chata'ah*: [forgiving] sin;
13. נקה v*eNakeh*: vindicating (or pardoning).

These thirteen attributes of God are symbolized in the thirteen twists found in the last winding of each ritual **fringe** on a tallit. Since God recites them on high when desiring to forgive Israel, any Jew who recites these verses in sincere contrition while wrapped in a tallit will be forgiven all sins. Others insist they must be accompanied with action (R.H. 17b; Tomar Devorah 1).

Thirty-Two Paths of Wisdom: In **Sefer Yetzirah** , this refers to the supernal power inherent in the twenty-two letters of the **Hebrew** alphabet and the ten **sefirot**:

> With Thirty-two wondrous Paths of Wisdom Yah engraved and created His Universe with Three Sefarim: with **Sefer** (letters), with **Sefar** (numbers), and with Sippur (book); [The Thirty-two Paths are] ten sefirot of nothingness and twenty-two Foundation Letters … (SY 1:1)

The twenty-two letters are the Hebrew alef-bet. The ten sefirot are based on the ten utterances of God in performing the **Creation** (Gen. 1). Mastery of the paths gives one both transcendent knowledge and theurgic power.

Thread, Blue: *SEE* FRINGES.

Throne of Glory: (כסא הכבוד/Kisei ha-Kavod, also **merkavah**). Both **Isaiah** and **Daniel** describe **visions** of God seated upon a throne (Isa. 6; Dan. 7). Ezekiel's vision is of a "semblance" of God seated in a **chariot** (Ezek. 1, 10). Some understand that all the **prophets** are describing the same entity. As a result, it is sometimes characterized as God's "Throne-Chariot." The Throne is mentioned multiple times in the Hebrew Scriptures (Jer. 14:21, 17:12; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26, 10:1), but with little description. It may be made of sapphire (making it co-equal with the heavens?) (Ezek. 1:26), and/or it may be formed of living, numinous entities [probably Keruvim, **Cherubs**, but also possibly other numinous creatures— **Chayyot**, **Serafim**, and Ofanim] (Ibid.), but little else is revealed in

the **Bible**.

As the archetypal symbol of God’s Gevurah, God’s power, the Throne of Glory is one of the six things that preexists **Creation** (Gen. R. 1:4). God threw a chunk of the Throne into the abyss and the cosmos coagulated around it (Mid. Konen 2:24). There are many vivid, often rather literal, descriptions of the Throne and its prominent features. It is a celestial sky blue, the same blue that is part of the fringes an Israelite must wear. Another **Midrash** calls it Chashmal, amber. Made of half fire, half **hail**, it hovers in the air, is eight hundred thousand parasangs in length and five hundred thousand in width—and that is calculated in the parasangs of **heaven**, which is two thousand cubits of the length of God’s arm (PdRE 3, 4, 6; BhM 2:25, 41–46). Some descriptions acknowledge it more as metaphor: Hechalot Rabbati**, w**hich offers a poetic meditation on the Throne, calls it a meon (a “dwelling”), and a keli chemdah (a “precious vessel”). Since the first letter of the word kisei (“throne”) is kaf, and crescent moon shaped, Batei Midrashot (2:406) imagines the **moon** to be a visible sign of God’s throne, and therefore, God’s sovereignty.

When sitting upon the Throne in **judgment**, God is draped in a supernal robe of purple inscribed with the names of the martyrs of Israel (Mid. Teh. 4:12). The Throne is also inscribed with a human image. Some sources say it is **Adam**:

> The most noble of creatures is Adam; the image of man is on Your throne (Hechalot Rabbati 6:5)

but the majority claim it is the image of the **Patriarch Jacob**. Thus the Throne, like God’s **tefillin**, represents the metaphysical bond of the people **Israel** to the **Godhead** (Hechalot Zutarti). This passage, also from **Hechalot** literature, describes God addressing the ascendant adept:

> Give testimony to them of what you see by Me, of what I have done to the face of Jacob, your father, which I have engraved on the Throne of my Glory. (Hechalot Rabbati)

The idea that **Jacob's** image is inscribed on God’s throne, that Israel is the centerpiece, the chief mechanism for the unfolding of God’s kingdom, appears several times in different genres of Jewish writing, not just esoteric texts:

> And [Jacob] dreamed. And behold, a staircase was set upon the earth; and its head reached to the heights of heaven. And behold, the angels who had come with him from his father’s house ascended bearing good news to the angels on high, saying, “Come and see a just man” The one whom you desired to see, whose image is engraved on the Throne of Glory” And behold, the angels

from before the Eternal were ascending and descending to gaze at him. (Targum Neofiti, Gen. 28:1. Also see Gen. R. 68:5)

The angel **Sandalfon** stands over the Throne, weaving the prayers of Israel into God's **crown**. Four princes surround the Throne: **Michael** (right), **Gabriel** (left), **Uriel** (in front), and **Raphael** (behind). Other texts describe myriads of armies of angels arrayed around it. The **Earth** is the footstool of God's throne.



Diagram of the elements of God's Throne of Glory

There is one tradition that there are actually two thrones, the Throne of Strict Justice and the Throne of Mercy. When Israel prays for forgiveness, it moves God to leave the first and sit in the second (Sanh. 38b; PDRK 23.3).

Despite the detailed and exacting descriptions, the exact nature of the Throne is difficult to pin down. It has sentience and at times it speaks—and sings. Some passages suggest the Throne consists entirely of cherubim and Ofanim (winged and wheeled angels) (Hechalot Rabbati).

Later Kabbalistic teachings tend to understand the Throne as being more metaphorical than concrete. As a result, various sources equate the Throne with the heavens, the divine mind (Mada'ey ha-Yahadut), the supernal first **light** of Creation, or the Torah (Meshiv Devarim Nekhochim). Some Kabbalistic sources coyly intimate that that the Throne is, like the **Shekhinah**, an attribute of the divine feminine principle, so when the Glory of God sits upon it, it signifies a hieros gamos, that the male and female principles are unified.

Based on Daniel 7:9, one Sage teaches that there are thrones for the **Righteous** beside the Throne. **Abraham**, **Moses**, and **David** sit upon these thrones.

Metatron, the "lesser YHVH" also has a throne proximate to the Throne of Glory. It is such an enthronement in the presence of God, amounting to a kind of "angelification," that is the ultimate desire of the **merkavah** mystic.

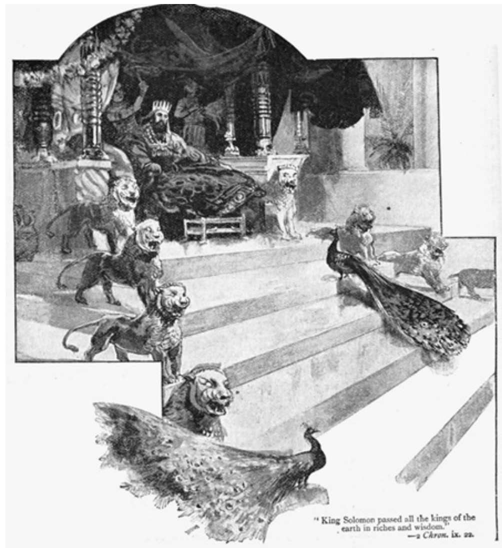
Akin to this idea that God draws the righteous close to the Throne, there are a number of traditions about what God keeps under the throne, including a Treasury of **souls** waiting to be born and a Treasury of Souls of the saintly dead. Four angelic encampments are arranged around the throne, just as the tribes of Israel were once arrayed around the **tabernacle** while they encamped in the desert (PdRE 4).

According to an oft-repeated legend, the face of Jacob is inscribed upon the Throne, signifying God's special devotion to the Patriarch and to Jacob's children (Gen. R. 68:12; PdRE 35). In the **World to Come** , the Throne will become visible and evident to all (J. Shab. 6:9).

The throne is represented in the material world by the **Ark of the Covenant**, as two **Cherubim** whose wings form God's "Seat of Mercy," corresponding to Ezekiel's vision describes God upon a **chariot**, also supported by cherubim (also see Ps. 99:1).

Throne of Solomon: Inspired by the **Holy Spirit**, King **Solomon** constructed a throne that resembled God's **Throne of Glory** (I Chron. 29:23). The throne had the images of the four faces that Ezekiel saw on God's **chariot**-throne: a man, an eagle, an ox, and a **lion**. It was engraved with the words of the Priestly Blessing and encrusted with precious gems so that it glowed. **Sefer Raziel** states that it resembled ice and that divine names are inscribed upon it.

Behind it was a large wheel back-panel, mimicking the Ofan angel behind God's throne. A **dove** hovered over the seat, and it was surrounded by images of **Cherubim** and **Chayyot** angels. It was mounted on six steps, reminiscent of the six lower levels of **heaven**. There were twelve golden lions and twelve golden eagles on the steps. Trees grew around the throne, and multi-hued cloths hung above it.



"Solomon's Throne" from Cassell's Illustrated Universal History by Edward Collier (1896)

There were also many living animals, clean and unclean, predators and prey, ringing the dais. These animals lived harmoniously together and would serve as mounts, moving Solomon on and off the platform. Some of the animals could speak. At times the animals would raise their voices together in Solomon's honor, imitating the angelic choirs that sing God's praises. Eagles could lift the entire throne complex, moving him from place to place.

Solomon's throne room was filled with seventy thousand chairs. The seventy leaders of Israel were always seated at the forefront. Two chairs nearest the throne were reserved for the prophets who attended Solomon—Gad and Nathan. A golden **menorah** of seven branches, each inscribed with the name of an antediluvian or a Patriarch, stood nearby (Targum Sheni I:100).

Whenever Solomon uttered a just decision from his throne, the Holy Spirit would confirm the decision and lions would lick his feet.

After the Babylonian conquest, the throne was carried off to the **east**. Many kings attempted to sit on it, but the beasts surrounding it would prevent them. Finally the Romans broke it into pieces (Es. R. 1:2; Num. R. 12:21; BhM 2:83–85, 5:34–37).

Tiferet: (תפארת). "Beauty." The sixth and central of the **sefirot**. In classical **Kabbalah** , it is usually understood as the masculine principle of the **Godhead**. It is the sefirah of the written **Torah** (*Zohar* I:77a). It is also the critical harmonizing principle of the Godhead, balancing between the polar "left" and

"right" sides of divine **emanation**s. In the **Zohar** it is equated with the divine title Blessed Holy One. **Jacob** and Moses personify this sefirah, and green and purple are the colors that symbolize it.

Tihirin: "Noon [Demons]." This class of disease-bearing **demon** is mentioned in Targum **Song of Songs** 4:6, based on **psalm** 91:6. Loosely derived from the "scourge that ravages at noon" (tzohoriyim) mentioned in the anti-demonic Psalm 91 (verse 6). Based on their name and the context, the unique attribute of these creatures would seem to be their propensity to move about in daytime, a quality not generally associated with the demonic (Meg. 3a; *Ber*. 3b; Sanh. 65b).

Never brought up in **Talmud** or early **Midrash**, they first get explicit mention Targum Shir ha-Shirim 4:6. In the critical text, **Song of Songs** in the Targumic Tradition, they appear as teiharei, which is translated as "noontime ghosts." They receive the most prominent treatment in **zohar**, where they are referenced multiple times (ironically, given their name derivation) as a creature that interferes with the **night** flight of the **soul** to **heaven** (I:83a). Perhaps there is another layer of irony, because the name closely resembles the Hebrew word for "pure" and "glittering," yet these may be the very demons that trigger entrancing yet impure dreams in men (I:200a). Wittily, in his new *Zohar* translation Daniel Matt translates tehirin by the seductively charming alliterative "dazzling demons." [1]

1. Matt, *The Zohar*, vol. 3, 162.

Tikkun: (תיקון). "Repair/Rectification/Completion." Many magical-mystical practices in Judaism come with the rationale of **Tikkun**; that performing a **commandment**, rite, or act correctly will have the theurgic effect of repairing the cosmos and/or strengthening the **Godhead**. This idea, first fully developed in the teachings of **Isaac Luria**, reflects the notion that humanity exists in order to rebuild **Adam Kadmon** , the quasi-divine Anthropos that was God's ideal creation at the beginning of time. Tikkun can take place in virtually any situation; all aspects of the **Creation**, whether mundane or supernatural, are in need of tikkun. **animals** achieved it by being sacrificed in the **Temple** or by being slaughtered in accordance with the laws of Kashrut. People need to continue personal tikkun both in this life and the next. Chasidic exorcists, for example, perform "tikkun" upon **ghost**, helping them make the journey into the afterlife.[1] *SEE* BREAKING OF THE VESSELS.

1. Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 2, 27–30, 65–69, 107–8, 411–12.

Tikkun Leil Shavuot: (תקון ליל שבועות). "Rectification of Shavuot Night." In response to a **Midrash** which blames Israel for blemishing its relationship with God by sleeping in too long on the day God intended to give the **Torah** (S of S R. 1:57; PdRE 40), the mystics of Safed instituted a late **night study** session on the night of Shavuot, the festival dedicated to the giving of the Torah. To make up for the laxity of their **ancestor**, participants aim to remain awake until the morning service to hear the reading of the **Ten Commandments**. It is perhaps no coincidence that this **ritual** appeared in the 16th century, coinciding with the spread of coffee consumption into Jewish culture in the Middle East and Mediterranean.

Tikkun Chatzot: (תקון חצות). "Rectification of Midnight." A theurgic **ritual** developing out of the ideology of Lurianic **Kabbalah**. Modeled on the midnight **study** habits of King **David** (Ps. 119:62; Suk. 29b) and intended to rectify the cosmic damage to the **Pleroma** caused by the loss of the **Temple** and its world-sustaining ritual, it is mostly observed in the summer, between the commemorative days of the seventeenth of Tammuz and the ninth of Av (when the Temple was destroyed). The **Tikkun** is performed in two parts, the Tikkun Rachel and the Tikkun Leah, an effort to "arouse" the feminine forces within the deity to union with its masculine counterpart, thereby affecting a harmonization of the cosmic order. The liturgy mostly consists of **psalms** of lamentation and *vidui* ("confession") prayers, though the exact texts vary quite a bit from community to community.

Tikkun Shovavim: (תקון שובבים). "Rectifying the mischievous ones." *SEE* BANIM SHOVAVIM

Tikkunei Zohar: A late addition to the corpus of the **Zohar**, it is in fact a free-standing work in its own right, a commentary devoted primarily to expounding the mysteries of **Creation**, though it is quite free-ranging in its topic matter.

Tish: (טיש). "Table." Also Firen Tish; Farbrengen. Among the spiritual customs of **Chasidism** is the **rebbe**'s tish, a mass gathering of Chasids around their spiritual leader, in which the sharing of food and drinking is combined with lengthy discourses on **Torah**, singing (often wordless melodies known as niggunim), and ecstatic **dancing**. These normally occur at **Sabbaths**, festivals, or commemorative days, and can last many hours.

The Sages of the **Talmud** characterized the dining table of the Jewish home as a mikdash me'at (a "small **altar**"), elevating the mundane business of **eating** to a

sacerdotal level. The idea of a meal punctuated with Torah **study** also goes back at least as far as the **Talmud** (Avot 3:4; Tan. 5b). The practice continued on into the Middle Ages (Zohar II:154a), but early Hasidic masters were critical of their conventions, which focused more on virtuoso demonstrations of homiletic prowess rather than on spiritual inspiration.[1]

The Tish, by comparison is focused on cultivating an emotional and spiritual identification between the attending Chasids and their leader. Attendees are encouraged to observe and reflect on the every gesture of the rebbe, whose actions are understood to be "living Torah." Thus, for example, how the rebbe handles the food, or which morsel he chooses as his first, are all assumed to convey a spiritual lesson. In most cases, the tzadik makes no effort to explain his actions. It is left to the individual chasid to find the metaphysical implications of the master's behavior.

For many devout chasids, the tish is the highlight of their communal spirituality, for some it is more powerful than **prayer**. By means of notarikon, R. Sholem of Belz found that the initials of the phrase "You spread a table before me"—T'l'Sh —(Ps. 23:5) are the same as the initials for the phrase Tikkun Leil Shavuot, midnight **study** vigil held by Jews prior to celebrating the giving of Torah. Every evening spent at the tzadik's tish is as if you celebrated a major festival.

While there may be considerable food present, it is the food (usually **bread** and/or **fish**) that is blessed and distributed through the hand of the rebbe that holds the greatest interest. In large crowds, often only those closest to the rebbe get more than a fragment. In very large gatherings, to get any at all is a rare and precious event, enhancing the significance of receiving it. It comes to signify a kind of grace. This **food**, called *shirayim*, is considered imbued with great sanctity. While most will eat it, some participants will keep the morsels as **amulets**.[2]

Among CHaBaD Hasidim, these spiritual hoedowns are often called a farbrengen (Yiddish: "Gathering"). Functionally identical to the rebbe's tish practiced by other Chasidic groups, the farbrengen features long discourses on mystical teachings of Torah, interrupted by chanting, song and dance.[3] The crowd is also loosened up by a liberal supply of liquor present at all such events.

1. Werthheim, "Traditions and Customs in Hasidism," 383.

2. Rabinowicz, *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, 495–496.

3. Ibid., 125.

Tit ha-Yaven: (טיט היון). "Miry Clay." One of the seven compartments of **Gehenna**, its existence is derived from **psalm** 40:3. There slanderers, bribe takers, traitors, heretics, and all those who betrayed the trust of their fellows are punished (Gedulat Moshe).

Tobiah: Pious Israelite boy who is the protagonist of the book of Tobit. With the aid of **Raphael**, he battles and exorcises a **demon** that haunts a damsel in distress.

Tobit: This Jewish novella that is included in the Catholic canon of the Apocrypha tells the story of a young man, Tobiah, who is sent on a journey by his father. Meanwhile, a young bride, Sarah, is haunted by the **demon** Asmodeus, who slays seven grooms to the girl on each of their **Wedding nights**. The angel **Raphael** brings these two together and gives Tobiah the tools to defeat the demon and win the girl. It is the first detailed description of an **exorcism** found in Jewish literature.

Toilet: The Talmudic Rabbis actually offer considerable advice on toilet hygiene and the preservation of health during bodily evacuation. One is particularly vulnerable to the **evil eye** and **witchcraft** while in a privy (Ber. 62a; Shab. 67a). There is also a malevolent spirit that lurks in toilets and privies (Ber. 23a–b) known as the shed shel beit ha-kisei ("the demon of the outhouse"). *SEE* PRIVY DEMON; UNCLEAN SPIRITS OR IMPURE SPIRITS.

Toldot Adam: An 18th-century medical/magical book, possibly composed by Yoel ben Uri Halperin.

Toldot Yeshu: "The Chronicle of Jesus." A polemical tract against **Christianity** that gives an alternate version of the life of **Jesus** from that found in the Gospels. Like the Gospels, it is full of fabulous events, but in *Toldot Yeshu* these are credited to Jesus's talent as a magician. A fragmentary Aramaic copy appears among the Cairo Geniza collection. Since the medieval Church would not tolerate any counter-narrative to the New Testament or criticism of Christian traditions, even in parody form, the book was suppressed by Christian censors wherever they had to power to do so.

Tomar Devorah: "Palm Tree of Deborah." This 16th-century mystical-ethical treatise by Moses Cordovero explains that human transgression produces

Mashchit/destructive entities. It also explains the power of **Torah** to counteract **Samael** and all forces of **evil**.

Tophet: (תופת). "Roaster." A high place designated for the **sacrifice** of children to Pagan gods such as Molech. Child sacrifice, mostly in time of national or communal crisis, was an accepted element of Western Semitic paganism and tophets were created not only in Israel and Lebanon (2 Kings 3:27, 23:10; Jer. 7:31), but also in Phoenician colonies such as Carthage.[1]

1. L. E. Stager and S. R. Wolff, "Child Sacrifice at Carthage," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (Jan./Feb. 1984).

Torah: (תורה). "Instruction." The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). By tradition, all five of the books that constitute the Torah were given to the Jewish people on **Mount Sinai** through the agency of **Moses**. The term "**Torah**," however, can also be used informally to refer to the entire corpus of Jewish teachings (the phrase, "to study Torah," for example, can mean the **study** of any sacred Jewish text). At times it is even used as a synonym for "Judaism."

Despite the seemingly "historical" character of the five books (an account going from **Creation** to the death of Moses), in Jewish mythos Torah is a truly timeless supernal entity. It is one of the **six primordial things** (or **seven primordial things**) that predate Creation (Gen. R. 1:4, 8:2; Mid. Teh. 90:12; Mid. Mish. 8). The true Torah, the soul of the Torah, exists in **heaven** as black **fire** written on white fire (Tanh. Bereshit 1). Perhaps the most important **myth** in Jewish culture is that God used the Torah as the chief device and blueprint for ordering the universe:

> "In the beginning God created …" Rabbi Oshaya began: "Then I was by Him, as a nursling (amon); and I was daily all delight …" (Prov. 8:30); "amon" is a craftsman (uman). The Torah declares: "I was the working tool of the Blessed Holy One" in the manner of humanity; when a mortal king builds a palace, he builds it not with his own skill but with the skill of an architect. The architect moreover does not build it out of his head, but employs plans and diagrams to know how to arrange the chambers and the wicket doors. Thus God consulted the Torah and created the world, while the Torah declares, "In the beginning God created," "beginning" referring to the Torah, as in the verse, "Adonai made me [i.e., Torah] as the beginning of His way." (Prov. 8:22) (Gen. R. 1:1, 1:4; also see Tanh. Bereshit 1; PdRE 3)

According to Midrash Konen, God drew three drops of **water** and three drops of fire from the supernal Torah kept in heaven and from them God made the world (2:24). The Torah is the **light** of Creation (Ex. R. 5:3). It is also the **Tree of Life** that grew in the center of **Eden**. Lost after the expulsion of **Adam** and **Eve**, it was restored to humanity at Sinai, liberating humanity from **Death** by serving as the key to the afterlife (Ber. 32b, 61b; Lev. R. 18:3; Zohar I:132a). Other sources describe it as the ketubah, the **Wedding** contract between God and Israel, who have entered into a kind of cosmic **marriage** (Deut. R. 3:12; Pes. 106a).

The medieval **German Pietist** identified Torah as "the footstool of God," conflating it with God's **Glory** and the **Shekhinah**. Torah, in these terms, is nothing less than the physical manifestation of divinity, a kind of "God inscripted," as it were. To be constantly engaged in its **study** is the highest form of worship known to Judaism.

In what is perhaps the most description of the transcendent nature of the Torah, the **Zohar** teaches that the Torah has four aspects, the "**garments**" (narratives), the "body" (**laws**), and the "**soul**" and "soul of soul," the purely spiritual entity that is the hypostasis of deity. This passage merits being presented in its entirety:

> Rabbi Shimon said: Woe to him among men who says that Torah relates earthly stories and ordinary words! If so, even we today could compose a Torah with ordinary words, and more praiseworthy than all of them. And if it relates earthly stories? Even the rulers of the world possess more exalted stories. If so, we could imitate them and make a Torah out of them! Rather, all the words of Torah are exalted.
>
> Come and behold, The world above and the world below correspond perfectly. Israel below, the angels above. It is written concerning the angels, "He makes his angels spirits" (Ps. 104:4). But in the hour when they descend below, they dress in the garment of this world. For if they did not dress in a garment suited to the world [below] they would not be able to endure in this world, and the world could not tolerate them.
>
> If so with the angels, do too with Torah, who created them and the [lower] worlds, all of them, and for whose sake they all endure. In descending to this world, if she did dress in the garments of this world, the world could not tolerate it. Thus, the narrative of the Torah is the [external] garment of Torah. Whoever thinks that the garment is the Torah in essence, and not something else—may his lungs deflate and he will have no portion in the World to Come. It is for this reason David said: "Open my eyes, so I can see wonders

> from your Torah" (Ps. 119:18) [so I can see] what is under the garment of Torah.
>
> Come and behold: One in a garment is obvious to everyone, but the witless see someone in a fine garment and they scrutinize no further. But more important than the garment is the body; and the most important [aspect] of the body is the soul. So too regarding Torah. She has a body: the commandments of Torah, that are called "the body of Torah" [gufei Torah]. This body is dressed in garments, which are the narratives of this world. The witless of the world only look at that garment, the narrative of Torah, and they understand nothing else, and do not look for what is under that garment.
>
> The wise in understanding do not look at the garment, but at the body under that garment. The wisest, servants of the exalted King, who stood at Mount Sinai, look to the soul, the essence of it all, the essence of Torah. In the time to come, they even look upon the soul of the soul of Torah …
>
> Woe to the sinners who say that Torah is mere [worldy] narrative. They look at this garment and do not scrutinize further. Happy are the righteous that look at Torah as they should. Just as wine must be held in a jug, so must the Torah be dressed in a garment. So look only under the garment. (Zohar III:152a)

The earthly Torah, however, is still very powerful. King **David** wore a miniature Torah strapped to his right arm in combat and won every battle, thus illustrating that the Torah is also used as an **amulet** (Ps. 16:8). Both the words of Torah and the physical object of the Torah scroll have protective powers.

The **Talmud** notes that at times Torah narratives appear out of order. The Sages go on to explain this is deliberate—for if the Torah were properly arranged according to its heavenly configuration, any person reciting it could perform wonders, even resurrect the dead (Mid. Teh. 3:2; Yalkut 625:3). *SEE* BIBLE; ORAL TORAH; SEFER.

Torat ha-Melachim: (תורת המלאכים). "Torah of the Angels." A term for **secret** meanings to the Torah, the **commandments**, and/or Jewish law that are revealed by **angels** to pious individuals. While most authorities did not recognize angelic revelations as a basis for Jewish observance, some Jews of medieval Europe and Kabbalists put special stock in such angelic insights (Sefer Or Zarua; She 'lot u'Teshuvot min ha-Shamayim). *SEE* LAW AND THE PARANORMAL; MAGGID; STUDY; SUMMONING.

Tosafist: (תוספות). "Amenders." Medieval French-German Talmudists and **Bible** commentators (11th–13th centuries). Though the greater bulk of their studies concentrated on Jewish law and understanding the plain meaning of both the Bible and **Talmud**, the Tosafists were not without their own occult beliefs. A number of them engaged in theurgic practices, especially pertaining to adjuring **angels** and **demons** to assist them in their **study** of Torah. They also made use of **amulets** and mantic techniques.[1]

1. Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*, 121–231.

Tosefta to Targum Ezekiel: A **Hechalot** text on **angel** adjurations.

Totem: An object of **nature**, usually an animal, taken as a symbol for a people. Ancient Israelites had many totemistic symbols. The tribe of Judah (**ancestor** of modern Jews) had the lion as their totem, which is why lion iconography appears in **synagogues** and Jewish art to this day. Other tribes were also identified with plants or animals (Gen. 49; Deut. 33). Israelite mothers would often name their children based on events or phenomena associated with their birth. Animal names (Devorah, "bee"; Nachshon, "snake"; Huldah, "weasel") were commonplace. The "**Tree of Life** " is the totem for the **Torah**. A number of totemistic animals are associated with God (**eagles**, **lions**, oxen) (Ezek. 1). *SEE* MENORAH.

Tower of Babel: (מגדל בבל/Migdal Bavel). Already a fantastic tale as recorded in the **Bible** (Gen. 11), Jewish tradition added occult elements to the story. The **Midrash** includes the tradition that the builders intended to storm **heaven** and take it by force. After God confounded the speech of its builders, one-third of the building burned, one-third was swallowed by the **Earth**, and only one-third remained visible above ground. In the apocalyptic tradition, its designers turned into **demons** and spirits (Sanh. 109a; Apocalypse of Baruch). The peoples then scattered and eventually formed the distinctive seventy **nations** that make up the newly diverse humanity (PdRE 24; Tanh. Noah).

Trance: An altered state of consciousness. Many different forms of trances have been described in Jewish literature, including prophetic, mystical, and mediumistic or possessive types.[1] *SEE* ASCENT, HEAVENLY.; DANCE; MEDITATION; MEDIUM; PROPHECY AND PROPHETS.; VISION; YORED MERKAVAH.

1. Bilu, "Dybbuk and Maggid," 341–48. Also see Davila, "The Hechalot Literature and Shamanism."

Transmigration: *SEE* REINCARNATION.

Treasury of Souls: *SEE* TZROR HA-CHAYYIM.

Treatise on the Left Emanation: This revolutionary and influential esoteric text by Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen offers the first comprehensive mystical interpretation of evil as an integral part of God's emanation of **Asiyah**, the material world. In it, we learn of a demonic universe, later known as the Sitra Achra, which parallels and mirrors the angelic structures of the **sefirot**. The book also offers a mystical **eschatology**.

Treatise of Shem: An astrological almanac, found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, for predicting the future (especially agricultural conditions) based on the position of the stars and other conditions at the beginning of each year. The purported author of this work is Shem, the son of **Noah** , though the internal evidence of the document, like explicit references to the Romans, mark it as a work of late antiquity.

Tree: (עץ/**Eitz; Eitzim**). A tree is one of the most potent symbols in Jewish semiotics. It is a bridge between **heaven** and **Earth**, and can symbolize the **Torah**, the human being, and the **sefirot:**

> I Adonai make all; I alone stretch out the sky, the earth spreads out from Me (Isa. 44:24). [Read the last word as] Who is with me? I [alone] am the one that planted this tree for all the world to delight in it. And through it I spread all. I called its name All, for everything depends on it, everything goes forth from it, everything requires it, looks to it, waits for it, and from there the souls blossom in joy. I was alone when I made it. No angel excels above it who can say "I preceded you!" I was also alone when I spread out my earth in which I planted and rooted this tree. I rejoiced in unity and I rejoiced in them, who was with me that I revealed to him this mystery? (Bahir 22)
>
> What this Tree that you speak of? He said to him, [It is the] powers of the Holy Blessed One, one atop another, so they resemble a tree. Just as a tree, by water[ing], yields fruit, so too the Holy Blessed One multiplies the powers of the Tree by water[ing]. And what is the "water" of the Holy Blessed One? It is Wisdom, and the souls of the righteous fly forth from the fountainhead toward the great channel, ascend and cleave to the Tree. And by what means do they fly? By means of Israel, for when they are righteous and good, the Shekhinah dwells in their midst, and through their deeds they dwell in the bosom of the Holy Blessed One. He makes them fruitful and multiplies them. (Bahir 119)

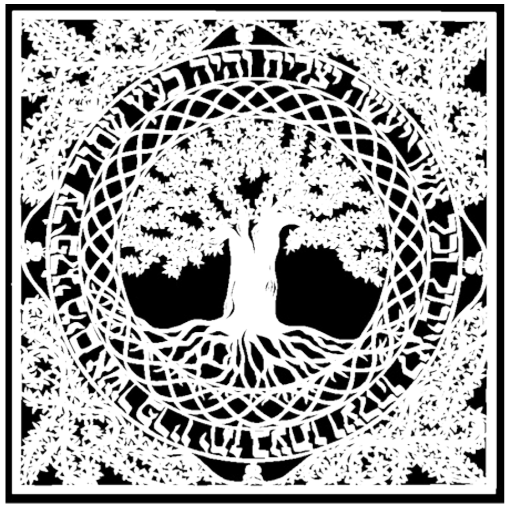
Trees are sentient (Gen. R. 13:2). The trees that grow in the **Garden of Eden**have **healing** powers (*BhM* II:53). They sing praises to God (Perek Shirah; J. Chag. 2:1; Zohar I:77a). The leaves give off a heavenly scent. Rabbi Abbahu, who collected such leaves in his gown, was later able to sell the gown for a fortune (*B.M.* 114a–b). The leaves of Edenic trees can be ground up and eaten for their healing properties. **Solomon** planted a variety of wondrous trees on the grounds of the **Temple** (J. Yoma 41d). They produced **fruits** for those who visited the Temple, but when gentile armies entered the Temple, the trees withered instantly and will not be restored until the Messianic Age (Yoma 38a; Sanh. 100a).

Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: (עץ הדעת טוב ורע). The **tree** at the center of the **Garden of Eden**. God forbade the primordial couple from **eating** its fruit, but at the prompting of the **serpent**, they did anyway (Gen. 2–3).

The Hebrew phrase tov v'ra ("good and evil") is actually a merism, two extremes which encompass all points between them; a fairer translation would be "The tree of the knowledge of all things," which would be in keeping with the serpent's claim that eating would make one like God (Also see "knowing good and evil" as a divine attribute, Gen. 3:5, 3:22). Because it is the source of humanity's expulsion from Eden, it is sometimes also called the "Tree of Death" (Seder Eliyahu Rabbah 5). Somewhat surprisingly, the **Zohar** regards the Tree of Knowledge to be an allegory for the **Shekhinah** (I:35a), because it draws from both sides of the **sefirot**.

The exact type of **fruit** that **Adam** and **Eve** ate was a matter of rabbinic debate. Candidates put forward several options including: grapes, pomegranates, etrogs, and figs. One Sage even argued for wheat, but his colleagues ridiculed him for that claim (Ber. 40a; Sanh. 70a–b; Gen. R. 15.7; RaSHI comment to Gen. 3:7). Fig has been the most obvious choice, because only a few verses later it is described how they made garments of fig leaves (Gen. 3:7). There is also a Talmudic tradition that the leaves of the Tree contain the knowledge of **magic** and consuming them grants one such gnosis (Ber. 40a; B.M. 114b).

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is linked to Atarah (Keter) in the sefirotic system (Biur al ha-Torah 1:67). In the Messianic Age, God will uproot the Tree from the world and replant it in **Gehenna**.



Tree of Life papercut by Deborah Tepper

Tree of Life: (עץ החיים). The source of immortality (Biur al ha-Torah 1:67–69), the Tree of Life grew in the middle of **Eden** with the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The **Zohar** claims that both **trees** grew from the same trunk. It is so big that the circumference of its trunk is "five hundred years' walking" (the ancients like to measure distance by time, see the book of Jonah) and watered all the places of the **Earth** (I:35a). All four of the primordial rivers branched out from beneath it (J. Ber. 2c). One legend claims the **rod** of **Moses** was culled from the Tree. According the rabbinic understanding, the Tree of Life is the **Torah**, and the **eternal life** that was lost in Eden was restored to humanity with the giving of the Torah at Sinai (Prov. 3:18; Ber. 32b, 61b; Zohar I:132a). This may explain the enigmatic declaration that the **souls** of the righteous ascend to **heaven** via the tree (Bahir 122; Mid. Konen). It is Tiferet in the sefirotic system, which is also equated to the Torah.

Twilight: This is a liminal time, a time of transition. Most fantastic traditions regarding twilight are associated with the twilight of the sixth day of **Creation**, the eve of the first **Sabbath**. **Adam** and **Eve** committed the **sin** of disobedience at that time, initiating history (A.Z. 8a). According to Avot 5:6, ten miracles mentioned in the **Bible** were preprogrammed into Creation at that time. A related tradition says that **demons** were created at twilight of the sixth day. *SEE* NIGHT.

Twin: (תאום). There is one famous pair of twins mentioned in the **Bible** (Jacob and Esau) and one in rabbinic literature (Abel and his twin sister, later **Cain's** wife) (PdRE 21). *SEE* PAIRS.

Tzadakhazy: (צדקהזי). An angel of the Countenance mentioned in Ma'aseh Merkavah.

Tzadi: (ע״ץ). The eighteenth letter of the **Hebrew** alphabet. It has the linguistic value of "tz/ts." It has the numeric value of ninety. It is one of the five letters that has a sofit form, a different shape if it appears at the end of a word. It symbolizes righteousness and humility.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 189–93.

Tzadik: (צדיק). *SEE* REBBE; RIGHTEOUS, THE

Tzadikiel: (צדיקאל). "Righteous of God." An **angel** mentioned in **Sefer Yetzirah** and the **Zohar**. He is the good angel who escorts the individual home on the eve of the **Sabbath** (Shab. 119b) and who assists the dead entering **Eden** (Zohar II:247a; Zohar III:144a).

Tzavua: (צבוע). A ferocious beast whose fur contains 365 colors, mostly likely a hyena (Gen. R. 7; Josh. 1:3).

Tzedakah: (צדקה). *SEE* CHARITY.

Tzeidah Laderekh: Medieval tract by Menachem ben Aharon devoted to the astrological signs and their influence on humanity.

Tzelanit: (צלנית). "Shadow [Demon]." A class of **demons** frequently mentioned in **amulets** and **incantation bowls**. It also appears in **Targum** to **Song of Songs**.

Tzelem: (צלם). "Image." In the **Zohar** and later Jewish **mysticism**, the "image" of God mentioned in Genesis 1:26 is thought to refer to a specific dimension of the human being, a kind of spiritual membrane or aura that mediates between the **Body** and the **soul**. The shadow cast by the human body is a visible effect of this aura.[1] This tzelem may be the same concept that appears in other Kabbalistic works as the **Guf ha-DAK**. *SEE* SHADOW.

1. Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 251–73.

Tzeruf/Tzerufim: (צרוף). Acrostic or letter recombination or **permutation**. As a technique of mystical research, Tzeruf refers to recombining letters in different order both to uncover **names of God** and in constructing **incantations** and other power phrases (SY 2:2, 6:4). It can also refer to incantations involving the combination of names of God with elaborate mathematical permutations of letters of the **Hebrew** alphabet. This was the preferred ecstatic practice of

Abraham Abulafia. The worthy ancients, such as **Moses**, were purportedly especially adept at this practice (Ber. 55a; Zohar III:2a; Sefer Peliyah 1:17b). Tzerufim incantations are used in a variety of theurgic rites, most notably summoning **angels** and **demons** and constructing a **golem**. *SEE* ABBREVIATIONS; CODES.

Tzimtzum: (צימצום). "[Divine] Self-Contraction/Withdrawal." According to Lurianic cosmogony, the Ein Sof of God had to "withdraw" (imagine creating a finite space within infinity, like a bubble or a womb) in order for the universe to emerge from within it as an independent reality. The implication of this is that God is "absent" from the world in a very real sense. On the flip side, there could be no sense of "otherness," or existence outside God, unless God had made this self-contraction:

> Know, that before the emanations were emitted and the creatures were created, a supernal light was extended, filling the entire universe. There was no unoccupied place, that is, empty air or space; rather, all was filled by that extended light … But then, the Infinite contracted Itself into a central point which is truly in the center of the light, and that light was contracted and withdrew to sides around the central point. Then an empty place remained with air and empty space. The Infinite then extended one straight line from the light, and in the empty space It emanated, created, formed, and made all of the worlds in their entireties. (Etz Chayyim I:1) [1]

This is necessary for the sake of **Creation** itself, for **free will**, and the fulfillment of God's ultimate will in Creation—that we engage in the **Tikkun**, or repair, of the world and so become worthy partners with God (Shem Olam; Tanya 20). While the cosmic model of God's withdrawal is a novel teaching of Luria, the concept of divine contraction was already taught in rabbinic literature (Tanh. Vayakehel 7).

According to one Chasidic theosophy, there is no differentiation or diversity from God's perspective—all is still One. From our perspective, however, God seems more absent than present. This divine-human disconnect in perception is the real nature of Tzimtzum (Tanya).[2] *SEE* EMANATION; EXILE.

1. R. Elior, "Tzimtzum: A Kabbalistic Approach to Creation," *Sh'ma Journal* (Jan. 6, 2010).
2. S. Drob, *Symbols of the Kabbalah: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), 12–154.

Tziyya: (ציאיה). "Dry Land." One of the seven realms that makes up the lower worlds, it is a desert/**wilderness** whose people aspire to the more fertile Tevel

(Sitre Torah, Zohar I:253b–254a).

Tzohar: (צוהר). A luminous **gemstone** holding the primordial **light** of **Creation**. Those who possessed it not only had illumination, but access to the secrets of the **Torah** and all its powers. Its biblical source is Genesis 6, where God instructs **Noah** to illuminate the ark by tzohar taaseh, “A brightness you will make.” Tzohar literally means “Bright/glittering/noon light” (The **Hebrew** word for noon, tzohoriyim, is derived from the same root), is not further defined in the Hebrew **Bible**. Some translate this simply as “window.” Jewish esoteric tradition, however, regards the tzohar to be a kind of luminous gemstone holding the primordial light of Creation.

The ambiguity and the imaginative use of the word tzohar is grounded in its status as a hapax legomenon, a word that appears only once in the Bible, and therefore lacking any further point of comparison for the purpose of fixing its meaning. All philologists have to go on regarding the word is the one context of Genesis 6:16. In this verse it seems to refer to a structural feature. Some translators propose “roof.” Others use “window,” “skylight,” or simply “opening.” Each translation presents a problem in that we already have elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures other words for these objects. There are also logic problems: why put an opening in a structure that will subject to torrential **rain** for forty days? And since the day and **night** provided little or no natural light during **the Flood** (Gen. 8:22; Gen. R. 25:2, 34:11), what would be the purpose? All this invites speculation the tzohar was something as unique as the word itself (Gen. R. 31:11).

The fact that the word for “noon/zenith,” tzohoriyim, shares the same root, but especially because of its linguistic similarity to the word **zohar** (“shine/radiant”), triggered an assumption that it is a form of light source rather than an aperture to let light in.

Targum Yonatan may be the first source to claim the tzohar was a luminous stone, pulled from the primordial river Pishon (Gen. 6:16). This is elaborated on in Genesis Rabbah 31:11:

> During the entire twelve months that Noah was in the Ark he did not require the light of the sun by day or the light of the moon by night, but he had a polished stone which he hung up—when it was dim, he knew it was day, when it was bright, he knew it was night.

Another version of this idea appears in the **Talmud**, Sanhedrin 108b:

> “Make a tzohar for the ark,” R. Johanan said, The Blessed Holy One

> instructed Noah: "Set there precious stones and jewels, so that they may give you light, bright as the noon."
> [In Hebrew, this is a play on words between **tzohar** and tzohoriyim.]

The same idea is reiterated in the medieval **Midrash** Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 23. The matter might rest there, but elsewhere in the Talmud, there is another tradition that **Abraham** also had a miraculous stone:

> R. Shimon b. Yochai said, Abraham had a precious stone hung round his neck which brought immediate healing to any sick person who looked on it, and when Abraham our father left this world, the Blessed Holy One hung it from the wheel of the sun. (B.B. 16b)

This naturally led to speculation that that the stones of Noah and Abraham were one and the same. And given Genesis Rabbah's allusion to the river Pishon that flowed through the **Garden of Eden**, the logical origin for this tzohar would be with there, where God hid the supernal light of the first day for the sole use of the righteous:

> It was taught, the light which created in the six days … cannot illumine by day, because it would eclipse the light of the sun. Where is it? It is stored for the righteous in the messianic future … He set it apart for the righteous in the future. (Gen. R. 3:6)

And:

> The Holy Blessed One created many things in His world, but the world being unworthy to have the use of them, He hid them away … the example being the light created on the first day, for Rabbi Judah ben Simon said: Man could see with the help of the first light from one end of the world to the other. (Ex. R. 35:1. Also see Talmud Chag. 12a; Lev. R. 11:7; Gen. R. 41:3; and Zohar I:31b, all homiletically based on Gen. 1:3; Ps. 97:11; and Job 38:13)

Those who possessed the tzohar not only had illumination, but access to the secrets of the Torah and all its powers. The angel **Raziel** gave it to **Adam** after the Fall. Adam gave it to his children. It passed to **Noah** . In one version, Abraham returned the tzohar to **heaven** and hung it on the **sun**, while other traditions track its continued use by the righteous of each subsequent generation: **Joseph** used it for his **dream** interpretations. Moses recovered it from the **bones** of Joseph and placed it in the **tabernacle** (Sanh. 108b; B.B. 16b; Lev. R. 11; Gen. R. 31:11). A text known today as "The Queen of Sheba and Her only Son Menyelek," translated by Sir E. A. Wallis Budge includes this verse:

> How the House of Solomon the King was illuminated as by day, for in his wisdom he had made shining pearls which were like unto the sun, the moon and the stars in the roof of his house.

Even that is not the end of the matter. The Zohar claims that Simon Ben Yochai possessed it in the Rabbinic era (Zohar I:11a; Otzer ha-Midrash).

Tzorecha Gevoha: (צורכה גבוה). "A Need on High." Judaism teaches the relationship between God and humanity is one of interdependency. Ever since the pre-socratic philosopher Parmenides offered his reasoning on the nature of divinity and perfection, Western philosophic theology has rejected the idea that God lacks self-sufficiency (God, being perfect, needs nothing outside of Himself) and possesses impassibility (God is not affected by human actions). Yet the God of Israel, who is without question the "supreme being," nonetheless is frequently portrayed as in need of humanity's partnership. It is implicit throughout the Hebrew **Bible**, where, for example, God's anger over humanity's disloyalty betrays an anxiety that God might, in fact, lose us.

The piyutim (liturgical poems) of Byzantine Judaism imply that God needs the worship of Israel to truly be a "supreme being":

> The One surveyed, and looked out at the world as a city without inhabitants, and a commander without and army. He considered this, and said "What have I accomplished? I created and achieved, but who will recount My praises?" [1]

Rabbinic teaching assumes this interdependency in a variety of ways. First, the **Talmud** continues the theme that God needs our praise, or, at least, our encouragement:

> It was taught as Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha says: "I once entered the innermost part of the Temple to offer incense and saw Akatriel-Yah, seated upon a high and exalted throne. God said to me: 'Ishmael, My son, bless Me [barcheini]!' I replied: 'May it be Your will that Your compassion overcome Your anger. May Your compassion prevail over Your other attributes. May You deal with Your children compassionately. May You not judge us solely with strict justice!' And God nodded to me." (Ber. 7a)

> Rabbi Joshua Ben Levi also said: When Moses ascended on high, he found the Holy Blessed One tying crowns on the letters. He said to him, "Is there not 'Peace' in your town [won't people even wish me well]?" He answered, "Shall a servant offer a greeting of 'Peace!' to his master?" He said, "Yet you

> should help Me." Immediately he cried out to Him, "And now may the power of Adonai be magnified, as You have spoken!" (Num. 14:17; Shab. 89a)

This theme continues to be stated in variant forms (PdRE 6). God only achieves the status of God through the act of creating something outside Himself that can bear witness to God's existence (PdRK 12:6). According to the Rabbis, God cannot prevent even the most repugnant human decisions directed against Him, though God can bend nature to punish such actions (Lev. R. 22:3; PdRE 49).

The Kabbalists continue to affirm that God is, in a very real sense, "dependent" upon us. The unique contribution of the medieval mystics to this belief is how they dovetail it with another aspect of Jewish thought (one that extends well beyond the mystical), the taamei mitzvot, the "reasons for the commandments." The TaNaKH is fickle about explaining the purpose of commandments. Sometimes an explanation of an individual command is offered (why for example, taking bribes is forbidden), sometimes the reason approaches the self-evident (why we shouldn't murder), but often, no explanation for a particular commandment is forthcoming at all (much of the sacrificial system, for example, is mandated without any clear rationale).

The Rabbis do attempt to explain the rationale for many of the mitzvot, but again, there is not a lot of effort to offer a systematic theory of the mitzvot, except perhaps this:

> Israel is beloved by God, for He surrounded them with mitzvot: **tefillin** upon their heads and arms, tzitzit upon their garments … This can be compared to a king of flesh and blood who said to his wife: "Adorn yourself with all your jewelry [I gave you] so that you will be desirable to me." So too the Holy Blessed One says to Israel, "Distinguish yourself with mitzvot so you will be desirable to me." (Sif. D. 36)

In other words, the Rabbis include the mitzvot in their erotic theology: In love God gives us the commandments as ornaments of His love. When Israel wears (performs) them, it enhances God's desire for us. Still, this is not such a compelling reason, particularly when one is called upon to perform arcane and seemingly pointless rituals.

Early Kabbalism resolves this puzzle. The commandments, all of them, are understood to function theurgically; they don't just help us, they help God. This is baldly stated in the 13th century mystical treatise Sha'arei Orah, Gates of Light, asks rhetorically, "Doesn't one see that the lower worlds have power to build or destroy the worlds above?" [2]

Underpinning all of this is the assumption that while God is certainly the ultimate entity, the “supreme being,” God is also passionate and dynamic and the created universe serves a need in God. It is not, as the Greeks theorized, that God is “The unmoved mover,” but rather as A.J. characterizes divinity, as “the most moved mover.”

1. M. Swartz, *The Signifying Creator: Non-Textual Sources of Meaning in Ancient Israel* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 26.

2. Gikkatilla, *Gates of Light*, 62.

Tzoreif: (צוריף). “Alchemy.” *SEE* ALCHEMY.

Tzror ha-Chayyim: (צרור החיים). “The Bonds of Life.” In Kabbalistic metaphysics, this is the supernal resting place of righteous **souls** before they are transmigrated into new bodies (Maggid Meisharim, Ki Tissa). Other sources describe this as a realm where the highest soul (neshamah) dwells in the constant presence of God. It is also characterized as a treasury or storehouse beneath or within the **Throne of Glory** (Yev. 62a), which is also demonstrated by **gematria**: b’kisei ha-kavod “In the Throne of Glory,” has the same value as b’tzaror “In the bond.” It is the womb of the **Shekhinah** (Zohar I:181a). In any case, it is a place of unsurpassed bliss (Siddur; Etz ha-Chayyim 2). *SEE* GUF HA-BRIYOT.

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U



E. M. Lilien An der Nähmaschine

Unclean Spirits or Impure Spirits: (רוחי תמא/Ruchei Tamei). **Evil** spirits often linked to the priestly **purity** system (Zech. 13:2). **ritual** laxness invites attack by these spirits, which inhabit privies, foods, liquids, beds, and even hands contaminated by tamei, ritual impurity (Kid. 72a; Ber. 62b; Zohar I:83a, 184b). They also strike while one **sleeps** , through inducing **nocturnal emissions** that render a person impure (Shab. 109a; Zohar I:10b; Zohar III:67a). Since **Death**

also has strong associations with ritual impurity, a few texts hint that they may be spirits of the dead (Num. R. Chukkat 19:8; 11Q11; Sanh. 65b), but most texts treat them as demons.

The rabbinic attitude toward these spirits at times parallels contemporary attitudes toward hygiene, even to the extent that authorities taught that such spirits "infect" the **Body** by entering through orifices and membranes. Concern about ruchei tamei may have had a role in shaping the custom of hand washing after leaving a cemetery, but there is no text known that directly links the two (Shab. 108b; Tosafot on Yoma 77b and Chul. 107b; Orah Chayyim 4.3, 10). *SEE* DEMONS; PURITY OR PURIFICATION.

Unicorn: *SEE* RE'EM.

Unleavened Bread: (מצה/Matzah). A large, cracker-like wafer that is eaten throughout the holiday of **Passover** in place of risen **Bible**. It is eaten to commemorate both the slavery and liberation our **ancestor** experienced. **Matzah** is made using only specially supervised (keeping it free from exposure to airborne yeast) wheat and **water**. It is then baked precisely eighteen minutes (the number symbolizing life).

It is a symbol of **ritual** and spiritual **purity**; Jews eat matzah free of leaven just as they must free themselves of the "leaven" of ego, sin, and old habits. It is also a symbol of **paradox**: it simultaneously symbolizes slavery and freedom. At the Seder, three pieces of matzah are prominently displayed, reminding Jews of both the three biblical classes of Jews (**priest**, Levite, and Israelite) and the three epochs (the **Garden of Eden**, historic time, and the time of the **Messiah**).

One aspect of unleavened bread that has particular occult symbolism is the Afikoman. The Afikoman is one-half of a matzah wafer that is publicly broken, only to be hidden away during the Seder. Children must then find it or steal it from the holder in order for the Seder to continue. Originally intended as a pedagogical tool to keep the attention of children during the ceremony, by the Middle Ages the Afikoman became a symbol of the occult and started to be used as an **amulet** against the **evil eye**. Customs include preserving a piece at home for good luck, while some may actually carry crumbs of the Afikoman in their coat pockets. Pregnant **women** will sometimes keep a piece of Afikoman nearby to ensure an easy labor. According to one tradition, an Afikoman kept seven years can avert a flood or other natural disaster.[1]

1. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 134, 295.

Uraltes Chymisches Werck: "Arcane Chemical Work." A treatise on **alchemy** credited to Abraham Eleazar, probably composed in the late 14th or early 15th century.

Uriel: (אוריאל). "God Is My Light." Uriel is one of the four princely **angels** (Sar ha-Panim) that surround [or form] the **Throne of Glory**>:

> As the Holy One blessed be He created four winds and four banners, so also did He make four angels to surround His Throne—Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael. Michael is on its right, next to the tribe of Reuben; Uriel on its left, next to the tribe of Dan, which was in the north; Gabriel in front, next to the tribe of Judah, also Moses and Aaron, who were in the east; and Raphael in the rear, next to the tribe of Ephraim which was in the west … (Num. R. 2:10. Also PdRE 4)

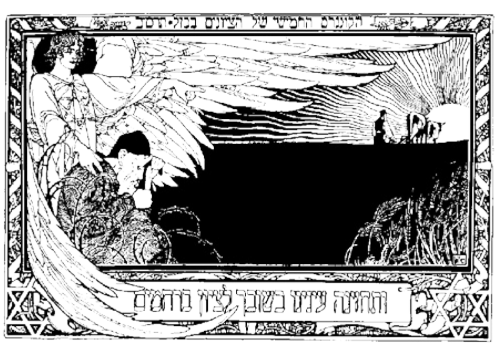
Though this text says he is the angel of the "north," in fact, there is no consensus within the tradition as to Uriel's exact position. Other sources claim he is the angel of the south. One text states he stands in front of the Throne of Glory, another text claims he is behind the Throne (Malachei Elyon).

He is first mentioned by name in **I Enoch** (chapters 9; 19–20), though he does not appear in a later angelic list in that same book. He is identified as the angel who revealed the secrets of the true, celestial calendar to **Enoch**, counteracting the impure lunar calendar given to humanity by the **fallen angels** (I Enoch 33, 80). In II *Esdras* he brings God's message of rebuke to Ezra (4:1). He appears regularly in medieval angelic lists (PR 46; Num. R. 2:10; Mid. Konen).

Uriel is regarded by some to the Sar ha-Torah, the Prince of the **Torah**:

> Why was he named Uriel? Because of the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings by means of which the Blessed Holy One, atones for sins and gives light to Israel. (Num. R. 2:10)

He is also the patron angel of **Jerusalem** (4 **Ezra** 10).



May Our Eyes Envision *by E. M. Lilien*

He has control over earthquakes and thunder. In the medieval aggadah Gedulat Moshe he is described as being made entirely from **hail**. He could also take on the form of an eagle. **Midrash** Aggadah claims he was the avenging force God sent against **Moses** for failing to circumcise his son Gershom (Ex. 4:14). He announced the birth of **Samson**.

In the **Zohar**, he is identified with the lion-faced angel in Ezekiel's **chariot**. In lion form, Uriel would descend and consume the **sacrifices** on the **altar** of the **Temple** (I:6b).

Uriel is one of the four **guardian angels** invoked for protection while sleeping in the bedtime **ritual** of K'riat Sh'ma al ha-Mitah. *SEE* SAR HA-PANIM.

Urim and Thummim: (האורים והתומים). A method of **divination** that was worn as part of the priestly garments (Ex. 28; Num. 27; 1 Sam. 28). The meaning of the names are uncertain, with the translations "Light and Perfection," "Oracle and Command," or "Cursed and Innocence" being proposed for a variety of reasons based on biblical Hebrew or cognate phrases from surrounding languages.

Equally little is truly known about the appearance and operation of the Urim and Thummim. The Rabbis understood the Urim and Thummim to be part of the breastplate of the High **priest** and that its oracular function came from light shining through the twelve gemstones mounted on the breastplate (PdRE 38). This was achieved by having a plate inscribed with the **Tetragrammaton** inserted behind the gemstone mounts. Supernal light radiating from the divine name would illuminate different stones. Since each stone was inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes, the **Talmud** teaches that it functioned as a kind of Ouija board, with messages being spelled on the Urim and Thummim for the High Priest. In Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, it is taught that the stone representing a tribe would glow if the tribe was involved in a transgression, but then the diviner would have to discern the specifics himself (38). Some believe the Urim were the lights, while the Thummim was a device or code that helped in interpreting the message.

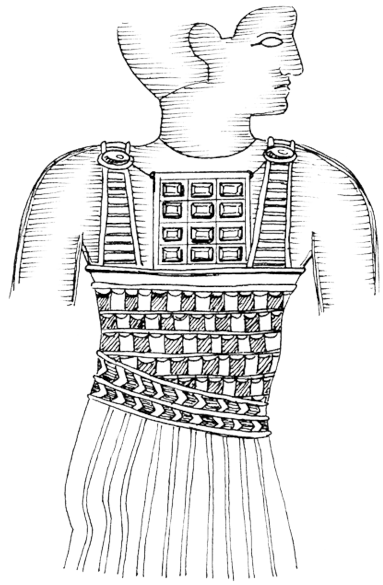
Other interpreters suggest that the Urim and Thummim were separate objects that were both kept in a pouch of the breastplate. In the **Bible**, one individual who made a counterfeit breastplate for his personal cult substituted **terafim** for the Urim and Thummim (Judg. 17–18; Hos. 3:4). This is a tantalizing but frustrating bit of data. Because we also know so little about the terafim, the association of the two objects does not shed much light on either, no pun intended. The best evidence is that the two may have both been made of light-

reflecting stone; Mesopotamian sources also mention an elmeshu stone used by the gods for oracular purposes.

The context for its mention in Scripture indicates the Urim and Thummim was only used for questions of grave importance, usually connected to the function of the state, such as whether and when to go to war, though there is one passage in Numbers that hints at the possibility it was used for more mundane questions, such as resolving difficult legal questions. While it is not mentioned by name, **Joshua** may have determined who violated God's decree of proscription at Jericho by means of the Urim and Thummim (Josh. 6–7). The answers given by the device that were recorded in the Bible were full sentences, suggesting either that the device was an aid to **Prophecy**, but did not operate apart from prophecy, or that the Rabbis were correct in their claim that it spelled out messages from the letters on the breastplate.

Mention of the Urim and Thummim ceases early in the history of Israel, indicating that it was no longer in use at the rise of classical prophecy (8th century BCE). There is some indication that it was reintroduced briefly during the Persian period, but it again quickly disappears from the records.[1] Post-biblical sources offer numerous elaborations on the history and operation of the Urim and Thummim, but many of the sources contradict each other, making it difficult to fix on any as a legitimate tradition (Dead Sea Scrolls 4Q376; 4QpIsa; Antiquities 3:8; Yoma 73b; Ex. R. 47; Sifrei Num. 141; Targum Jonathan to Ex. 28; Zohar II:234b; Ramban on Ex. 28). The Urim and Thummim have also become part and parcel of Western occult lore; Joseph Smith, for example, claimed to have used the Urim and Thummim to read "Reformed Egyptian" language of the golden book given him by the angel Moroni. The seal of Yale University also contains a reference to them.

1. V. A. Hurowitz, "True Light on the Urim and Thummim," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 88, Nos. 3–4 (Jan.–April 1998), 263–74; also see C. Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997).



Twelve-panel breastplate from Egyptian wall painting

Urine: Urine is used in magical formulae and **healing** remedies (Shab. 109b).

Ushpizin: (אושפיזין). "Guests." The spiritual or ghostly guests welcomed into the festive hut during the holiday of **Sukkot**. It is considered a great **Tikkun**, a great act of **healing** and rectification to have living **souls** share hospitality during the holiday of Sukkot. But ushpizin do not have to be alive. Jewish mystical tradition teaches Jews should summon the spirits of the ancestral dead to the **sukkah**. The **ritual** first emerged among the Kabbalists of 16th-century Safed. In the traditional explanations of this ritual, there is no sense that this is merely a symbolic act:

> When a person sits in his Sukkah the Shekhinah spreads its wings over it from above and then Avraham together with the other five Tzadikim make their dwelling with him. Rabba Abba said, "Abraham, five righteous ones, and King David make their dwelling with him." (*Zohar* III:103b)

These represent the seven days of **Creation**, as well as the seven lower sefirot. The sukkah serves as a kind of liminal zone between the physical and spiritual realms. The **prayer** of summoning is as follows:

> May it be Your will, Lord my God and God of my fathers, to send Your presence to dwell in our midst and to spread over us the sukkah of Your peace, to encircle us with the majesty of Your pure and holy radiance. Give sufficient bread and water to all who are hungry and thirsty. Give us many days to grow old upon the earth, the holy earth, that we may serve You and

> revere You. Blessed by Adonai forever—amen, amen. I invite to my meal the exalted guests—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David.

There are seven spirits, one for each day of the biblical observance. The 16th-century Italian mystic Menachem Azariah of Fanon also associated the seven "lower" sefirot with the seven prophetesses the **Talmud** enumerates: Sarah, Miriam, Devorah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, and Esther. A different one of these guests is invited for each **night** of the seven nights of the holiday, and the evening is spent expounding on the virtues and the spiritual significance of that night's visitor (Suk. 54b; Zohar II:256a; Zohar III:103b–104a). *SEE* ANCESTORS; HOSPITALITY; PATRIARCHS AND MATRIARCHS; RIGHTEOUS, THE

Uzza: (עזא). Princely and **guardian angels** of the Egyptians (BhM 1:39). In other traditions, he and Azazel opposed the creation of humanity. They in time fell in **love** with mortal **women**, producing demonic offspring from those couplings. They were punished by being chained to the Mountains of Darkness, yet from there they continue to wreak mischief (Yoma 67b; Aggadat **Bereshit**; PdRE 22; Zohar I:9b). *SEE* FALLEN ANGELS; MOUNTAIN.

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V

Vampire: (ערפד/Arpad; עלוקה/Aluka; Yiddish: Estrie). A blood-lusting monster. The earliest reference to what may be a vampire appears in the **Bible**, where it is called an **aluka** (Prov. 30:15). The earliest explicit reference to a vampiric creature occurs in a text of Late Antiquity, the **Testament of Solomon**:

> Behold, when the Temple of the city of Jerusalem was being built, and the artificers were working thereat, Ornias the demon came among them toward sunset; and he took away half of the pay of the chief-deviser's little boy, as well as half his food. He also continued to suck the thumb of his right hand every day. And the child grew thin, although he was very much loved by the king. So King Solomon called the boy one day, and questioned him, saying: "Do I not love thee more than all the artisans who are working in the Temple of God? Do I not give thee double wages and a double supply of food? How is it that day by day and hour by hour thou growest thinner?"
>
> But the child said to the king: "I pray thee, O king. Listen to what has befallen all that thy child hath. After we are all released from our work on the Temple of God, after sunset, when I lie down to rest, one of the evil demons comes and takes away from me one half of my pay and one half of my food. Then he also takes hold of my right hand and sucks my thumb. And lo, my soul is oppressed, and so my body waxes thinner every day."

Solomon responds to this threat by constructing a magic **ring** with which he enslaves this **demon** and, subsequently, higher orders of demons. In the end, the king uses these demon-slaves to help him construct the **Temple**.

Later, and very different, vampire traditions appear among the Jews of medieval Rhineland, not far from the areas where flourishing Christian beliefs in blood-sucking creatures would become the basis for Bram Stoker's story. These passages come from the "Testament of Rabbi Judah" section of Sefer Hasidim ("The Book of the Pious"), a wide-ranging tract on Jewish piety that includes stories about **ghosts**, **Liliths**, and other paranormal events:

> 1465: There are women that are called **estrie** … They were created at sunset [before the first Sabbath before creation]. As a result of this, they are able to change form. There was one woman who was an estrie and she was very sick and there were two women with her at night; one was sleeping and one was awake. And the sick woman stood up and loosened her hair and she was about to fly and suck the blood of the sleeping woman. And the woman who

> was awake screamed and woke her friend and they grabbed the sick estrie, and after this she slept. And moreover, if she had been able to grab the other woman, then she, the estrie, would have lived. Since she was not able to hurt the other woman, the estrie died, because she needs to drink the blood of living flesh. The same is true of the werewolf. And since … the estrie need to loosen their hair before they fly, one must adjure her to come with her hair bound so that she cannot go anywhere without permission. And if an estrie is injured or seen by someone, she cannot live unless she eats of the bread and salt of the one who struck her. Then her soul will return to the way it was before.

> 1466: There was a woman who was suspected of being an estrie, and she was injured when she appeared to a Jew as a cat and he hit her. The next day she asked him to give her some of his bread and salt, and he wanted to give it to her. An old man said to him (Eccl. 7:16) "Be not overly righteous." When others have sinned one must not show kindness, for if she lives, she will harm people. Thus the Holy One, blessed be He created her for you [as a test]. This is similar to Amalek and Saul. Saul was punished for saving Amalek's life. [1 Sam. 15]

The nature of these vampires is strangely indeterminate. In the beginning of the passage, they are identified as demonic spirits, as in the **Testament of Solomon**. On the other hand, the end of the passage suggests that this is an ordinary woman (apparently, she has a **soul**) living within her community. Other passages in Sefer **Chasidism** convey that same idea. Perhaps the resolution of this puzzle is that vampirism was understood to be a kind of **demonic possession**, though this is never stated explicitly. A estrie wounded while in monstrous form would die unless she was able to acquire **bread** and **salt** from the assailant while in human form. There is also one example of a judicial proceeding being conducted against a suspected estrie. Not surprisingly, conviction results in a death sentence. Apparently killing an estrie presents no particular challenge, but there is a potential post-mortem complication:

> When an estrie that has eaten children is being buried one should observe whether her mouth is open, if it is, she will persist in her vampirish pursuits for another year unless it is stopped up with earth. (cf. Sefer Hasidim 5) (Toldot Adam v'Havah 28)

Vav: (ו). The sixth letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**. It has a vocalic value of "v/w" or "o" and the numeric value of six. It is one of the letters that make up the

Tetragrammaton. It denotes physical completion. In the case of some biblical personalities, such as Jethro (formerly Jether), a vav is added to their name to symbolize a spiritual fulfillment.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 94–103.

Vestments of the High Priest: For his service before God in the **tabernacle**, and later, in the **Temple**, the High **priest** was required to wear an elaborate set of vestments (Ex. 28, 39). These consisted of nine objects: a ketonet (fringed tunic), michnasayim (breeches), mitznefet (turban or beret), avnet (sash), hoshen mishpat (breastplate of **judgment**), ephod (decorative poncho or cuirass), me-il (long robe), tzitz (a diadem or frontplate for the mitznefet), and the Urim and Thummim (M. Yoma 7:5).

According to the pseudepigraphic writings coming out of priestly culture, the garments of **Adam** God made for the first couple at their expulsion from **Eden** prototypes of the priestly vestments that allowed them to perform **sacrifices** and that were passed down through the generations. Each item imbued the wearer with a different virtue (Jubilees 3:26–27; **Testament of Levi** 8:1–2). According to Philo, the vestments were a **microcosm** of the world (Life of **Moses** 2.23–26. Also see Wisdom of **Solomon**18:22–24). This notion is reiterated in the **Midrash** (Tanh. B Toldot 12).

The garments represent the whole people, and each object serves to atone for a different **sin** found among the people **Israel** (J. Yoma 44b–c). The garments also facilitate his angelification during the service (Emet mah Nehedar piyut).[1]

1. Swartz, *The Signifying Creator*, 33–54.

Vilna Gaon: Talmudist and Kabbalist (Lithuanian, 1720– 1797). Though most famous for his opposition to **Chasidism**, the Vilna Gaon (Elijah ben Solomon Kramer) was a prolific writer on Kabbalistic topics, including commentaries to the **Zohar** and **Sefer Yetzirah** . He also wrote a commentary on the book of Jonah that treats it as an allegory for **reincarnation** of the **soul**. Some admirers ascribed **miracles** and wonders to him, though the Gaon himself made no such claims for himself.

Vilon: (וילון). The lowest of the **seven heavens**, it serves only as a membrane between day and **night**. The name is derived from Isaiah 40:22 (Chag. 12b–13a).

Virility: Potions for virility and potency are commonly found in Hebrew magico-medical texts. One is even mentioned in the **Talmud** (Git. 70a). *SEE* SEX.

Vision: (חזון/Chazon, also Ra'aya). There are three kinds of mystical encounters with divinity recorded in Jewish tradition: the ineffable experience, in which nothing experienced is in any way describable; the auditory, in which a voice (a Bat Kol, or **maggid**, for example) addresses the person(s); and the visionary experience, in which the person has some kind of visual impression of the encounter. And since, by definition, the first does not lend itself to be put into writing, it is not surprising that the latter two are by far the best documented in Jewish tradition. Of the latter two, purely auditory experiences appear to be the basis for the many poetic oracles of the literary prophets, but are not the primary interest of this entry. Though vivid in their descriptions, few truly visual experiences are recorded in biblical prophecy, though these visions almost always include an auditory manifestation.

Ocular paranormal visions, whether recorded by prophets, mystics, or ordinary Jews, generally fall into one of these three types: a manifestation of God's **glory** on **Earth** (Ex. 19–22; Ezek. 1), an angelic or demonic visitation (Gen. 18; Num. 24), or an unveiling of the occult cosmos (I Enoch; Sefer **Hechalot**; Sha'ar Ruach ha-Kodesh, Mavo; Divrei Yosef 364). The three types frequently overlap, as in the case of **Isaiah's** or **Zechariah's** visions. These visions can be experienced while asleep or in a waking state.

The most common elements that appear in these visions are **light**, **clouds**, **fire**, numinous beings (whether anthropomorphic or hybrid in appearance), and/or the **chariot**-throne of God (Ber. 7a; Meg. 24b; Zohar I:103b). *SEE* AKATRIEL-YAH; CHERUB, THE UNIQUE.; DREAM; FACE OF GOD; IMAGINATION; MALACH ADONAI; REIYAT HA-LEV; SHEKHINAH; SHI'UR QOMAH.

Vital, Chayyim: Kabbalist (Ottoman, 1542–1620). A leading disciple of **Isaac Luria**, Vital experienced many fantastic **visions** and personal revelations. **Elijah** and other righteous men of the past appeared to him. He performed **healings**, **exorcisms**, dowsing for **water**, and at one point declared himself the **Messiah**. He also believed he had undergone multiple incarnations and, for example, had the **soul** of Rabbi Akiva (Sefer ha-Hezyonot I:10). His writings, including Etz Chayyim, Otzerot Chayyim, an Sha'arei ha-Gilgulim not only provide some of the most complete accounts of Luria's mystical cosmology, but also give us detailed information about **reincarnation**, **ghostly possession**, **divination**, and **dream** interpretation.

Voodoo or Magical Dolls: The use of figurines for magical ends was known to the Babylonians and was a mainstay of Greek magic. It is a feature of only a very

few **ritual** in Hebrew magical texts. **Sefer ha-Razim**, for example, includes only one ritual involving making a figurine as part of a magical incantation to drive away **lions**.

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W

Wall, Western: (ltk/**ha-Kotel**). Alternately called the “Wailing Wall” or simply “the Wall,” this retaining wall to the platform of the Temple Mount created by King Herod is the last remaining remnant of the **Temple** in **Jerusalem**, the nexus point of communion between God and **Israel** (Ber. 32b). As such it is considered the structure closest to the **Holy of Holies** that a Jew can approach without being in danger of stepping on that most sacred ground, an act forbidden to all but the High **priest**. It is a place of great spiritual power in Judaism, drawing pilgrims who not only desire the merit of having prayed there, but who also leave **prayer** petitions, called kvitlakh, in the crevices in the hope that their supplications are more likely to get a positive outcome.

According to legend, the poor of Jerusalem originally built the Wall, the only contribution they could afford to give King **Solomon**’s project. The Shekhinah is intimately linked to the wall,

> “Behold, He stands behind our wall.” (S of S 2:9). “Wall” refers to the Western Wall of the Temple which will never be destroyed. Why? Because the Shekhinah is in the west. (Num. R. 11:2. Also Ex. R. 2:2)

The **Zohar** and Moses Cordovero elaborate on this claim, even suggesting it is the Shekhinah physically manifest, nexus of the masculine and feminine energies (Zohar II:5b; 116a). On the ninth of Av, the anniversary of the day when the Temple was destroyed, a white **dove** will join those gathered in mourning; the Wall itself weeps. Supposedly, there is one stone with an idolatrous image carved into it made by King Manasseh and enchanted with a spell by King Jeroboam that hinders the redemption. It is no longer visible, and several legends relate that the cursed stone was removed by one or another spiritual genius, but no one knows for sure. Miraculous signs of God’s mourning for the destroyed Temple are sometimes reported (Hemdat Yamim, Rosh Chodesh 4a). It is the place where the **Messiah** will appear (S of S R. 2:22).

War Scroll: This **Dead Sea Scrolls** text, also labeled 1QM and 4QM, details an eschatological war that is to eventually be fought between the **sons of Light** and the **sons of Darkness**. *SEE* ANGEL; MANUAL OF DISCIPLINE.

Warrior, Divine: One of the most popular mythic ways to portray the God of Israel in the **Bible** was as a hero or warrior (Ex. 15; Pss. 2, 9, 24, 29, 46, 48, 98, 104; Isa. 34–35, 42–43; Zech. 9). This “divine warrior” motif usually follows a set literary pattern: threat, combat, theophany, victory, the salvation of **Israel**, and

God’s universal reign. The order may vary according to the needs of the poet, with different elements being added or modified to reflect the historic circumstances or the mythic theme they wanted in the forefront. The appearance of the motif often has nothing to do with military threats to Israel, instead being used to highlight God’s capacity to bring **rain**, control **nature**, domesticate the wild, or bring moral order to a land in **chaos** (Jer. 5:22; Pss. 44:19–20, 104:26; Job 7:12, 38:8, 10–11, 40:25–29). This type of hymn has its roots in Canaanite-Mesopotamian hymns (Baal and Yamm, Enuma Elish).[1]

1. F. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 91–111.

Wars of Adonai, Book of: (Sefer Milchamot Adonai). A lost book mentioned in the **Bible**, it evidently contained accounts of God’s victories over Israel’s enemies. Not to be confused with the famous medieval philosophic work of the same name by Gersonides. *SEE* WARRIOR, DIVINE.

Watcher: (**עיר/Ir**). “Wakeful One.” A class of high **angels**, sometimes characterized as "**archangels**,” first described in the book of Daniel (4:10–14). Drawing on a single verse in Genesis 6:4, **apocalyptic literature** declare these are the **fallen angels** who have intercourse with mortal women, producing the race of giants:

> In those days, when the children of man had multiplied, it happened that there were born unto them handsome and beautiful daughters. And the angels, the children of heaven, saw them and desired them; and they said to one another, “Come, let us choose wives for ourselves from among the daughters of man and beget us children.” And Semyaz, being their leader, said unto them, “I fear that perhaps you will not consent that this deed should be done, and I alone will become (responsible) for this great sin.” But they all responded to him, “Let us all swear an oath and bind everyone among us by a curse not to abandon this suggestion but to do the deed.” Then they all swore together and bound one another by (the curse) and they were altogether two hundred … (I Enoch 6:1–7. Also see I Enoch 7, 19, 64, 69; Jubilees 4, 7)

They subsequently corrupt humans with forbidden knowledge and ultimately rebel against God. In Gedulat Moshe, these angels perform the celestial **music** of the sixth heaven. They are central figures in the mythic theology of the **Qumran priests** (Community Rule II, IV; Damascus Document, II, III; War Scroll XIII). The belief that angels rebel against God and are the source of **demons** is utterly abandoned in Rabbinic literature, but has a short resurgence in some medieval

Jewish sources, such as Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, perhaps because of new encounters with Christian myths. *SEE* ENOCH, BOOKS OF.

Water: (מים). Water occupies a central and complex place in Jewish **myth** and ritual, beginning with the words, “The Spirit of God hovers over the waters” (Gen. 1:2). From this passage, Jewish esoteric tradition derives the belief that water is a primordial force, a **sign** of divine energy, and a key component in encountering and invoking divine power (Chag. 12b). Functioning as a multivalent symbol in Judaism, water is also a symbol of **Torah** (B.K. 82a; Gen. R. 54:1), as well as a mechanism of **purification**.

Water is the visible manifestation of **chaos**. Order only emerges as God drives back and delimits the watery **abyss** (Ex. R. 15:22). God’s separating the waters into heavenly and earthly zones then permits the cosmos to appear (Gen. 1; Tan. 10a; Num. R. 18:22). With the appearance of dry land, God traps the primordial waters under the **Earth** and seals them in place with the Foundation Stone.

According to the Talmudic Sages, all the water of the universe is divided between the female tellurian waters and the male celestial waters. Their joining together fructifies the earth (Tan. 10a; Gen. R. 4:2–4, 13:11, 13:13). This is the rationale for the water libation service performed on **Sukkot**. There is a similar gender distinction made between **rain** and **dew**. This mythology of “gendered” waters plays a crucial role in mystical thought and theurgic practices (J. Ber. 9:3, 14a; Tan. 25b; PdRE 23). According to Azriel of Gerona, water was the primeval mother who gave birth to darkness. Water flowing from the heavenly **Eden** sustains life in the lower worlds (Zohar I:17b, 29b, 46a, 82b; Zohar III:223b).

Though God has tamed them, the waters still possess great and destructive power. Therefore, the appearance of supernal water while ascending through the **palaces** of **heaven** was considered a barrier and a danger to the living **soul** (Chag. 14b; Hechalot Ms. Munich 22d). When **David** attempted to move the Foundation Stone, he unwittingly unleashed the waters of the abyss, threatening to undo the world (PdRK 148b).

Water sources are also a favorite lurking place for spirits and **demons** , as exemplified by the incident of **Jacob** wrestling with a spirit being by the river Yabbok (Gen. 39. Also see Lev. R. 24.3; Pes. 112a), a belief that appears to be a hold-over from Pagan traditions (the Banyas rapids at the headwaters of the Jordan are named for the Greek god Pan and the ruins of a shrine to him are still visible there).[1]

By the same token, a body of water, because of its association with **purity**, is a place of revelation (Ezek. 1:3; Dan. 8:2, 10:4; III Baruch; I Enoch 13:7; MdRI Pisha 1; Eccl. R. 3:16). In the mystical book the Re'uyot Yehezkel, the prophet received his prophetic insights by gazing into the reflections on the river Chabar. From that time forward, water was a frequent component in rituals of power and protection.[2] The kings of Israel are anointed standing over water (Hor. 12a). Studying Torah by a stream ensures that one's memorization will "flow like a river." Ecclesiastes Rabbah 3:15 goes so far as to say that if one intends to use the name of God for theurgic purposes, one should do so only over a body of water. In a similar vein, Sefer ha-Shem and Sefer ha-Malbush teach that one may only transmit the knowledge of the proper pronunciation of the **Tetragrammaton** in a ritual while standing in or over water, based on **psalm** 29—kol YHVH al ha-mayyim ("the sound 'YHVH' is upon the waters").[3]

German Pietist would also perform theurgic rituals and transmit occult knowledge over water (Sefer ha-Malbush). Among the **merkavah** mystics, some rituals for drawing down **angels** required the summoner to be immersed neck-deep in living waters.[4] Perhaps the image of the angel appears in the reflecting surface. Some Jewish **divination** techniques include studying the patterns of **oil** poured into a bowl of water (Sefer ha-Hezyonot 5).

Without question, the water that has the greatest power is mayim chayyim, "living water." This is rainwater that has not yet been drawn from its source by human hands or by artificial conduit. All seas, natural lakes, rivers, and ponds are reservoirs of living water. A source of living water is also the necessary ingredient in a mikvah, or ritual bath. The potency of living water derives from the fact that it has fallen directly from the pure state of heaven. In fact, it serves as a kind of reservoir of the heavenly **Eden** here on earth, not unlike how we today think of the embassies in a country as being "foreign soil." As such, immersion in it has the power to purify that which it contacts.

Living water of all forms has heavenly, even life-giving, energy. This belief is exemplified by Ezekiel's narrative about the great life-giving river that will flow from the Temple Mount in the days of the **Messiah** (Ezek. 47:1–12).

For this reason living water is used in many rituals of power, such as constructing a **golem**, divination, ordeals, and the preparation of **amulets**. *SEE* MAGIC; MIRIAM; RAIN; RIVERS; SUMMONING.

1. T. Canaan, "Haunted Springs and Water Demons in Palestine" *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, no. 1 (1921): 153–70.

2. Winkler, *Magic of the Ordinary*, 174–75, 227n.

3. Dan, *The Heart and the Fountain*, 104–5.

4. Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, 218–19.

Water Libation or Water Drawing Ceremony: (ניסוך המים). When the **Temple** stood, one of the rituals of the holiday of **Sukkot** would be the Water Libation **ritual**. *SEE* SIMCHAT BEIT HASHOEVA.

Water of Bitterness: (מי המורים/Mai ha-Marim). A solution of **water**, dust from the grounds of the **Temple**, and the divine name (written either in the dust or on a parchment and then dissolved in the potion) that was a critical element in the **ordeal** the **Torah** designated as a way to determine if a wife has been unfaithful to her husband (Num. 5; Sot. 8b–9a; Num. R. 9:9). If the woman is guilty, the **ritual** causes her to manifest her guilt through some unpleasant abdominal event, probably either a peritoneal rupture or a prolapsed uterus that renders her barren. *SEE* SOTAH.

Wax: Wax was sometimes used as a materia magica in Greek magical texts, such as in the making of magical figurines similar to the popular conception of "**voodoo dolls**." There are not many parallel references to wax in Hebrew magical documents, **Sefer ha-Razim** being one of the few. In that book, wax is listed only as a method to seal the mouth of dead animals used in magical **rituals**. *SEE* MAGIC; SORCERY

Ways of the Amorites: (דרכי האמורי/Darkhei ha-Emori). The Amorites were a Western Semitic people related to the Israelites, who lived in the region of what is now Syria/northern Iraq, though it has been proposed that in the Talmudic age, the Sages use the term Emori in a deliberate metathesis of the word Romai, as an encoded way to offer criticisms of the Romans. Whatever the origins, "Ways of the Amorites" is a rabbinic expression for forbidden **ritual** practices, but especially magical and divinatory practices (Tos. Shab. 7, 8:4–12). It is often translated as "witchcraft." As a rule, any method of **healing**, even if it is overtly magical, is exempted from this prohibition (Shab. 67a).[1] *SEE* MAGIC; SORCERY; WITCH AND WITCHCRAFT.

1. Goldin, *Studies in Midrash and Related Literature*, 117.

Weapons: Tubal-Cain (Gen. 4:22) is credited by the Sages with being the inventor of weapons of war. Apocalyptic tradition claims they were introduced by the **fallen angel** (I Enoch 8:1–4).

There are several weapons of power mentioned in Jewish tradition. The **cherubim** posted to guard the way back to the **Garden of Eden** have a spinning fiery sword (Gen. 3). The sling stones used by **David** were miraculously

enhanced because he inscribed them with the names of the **Patriarchs**. In flight, they formed a single, lethal mass (Mid. Sam. 20:106–8, 21:109).

In the **Midrash**, there is mention of God presenting **Israel** at **Mount Sinai** with supernal weapons inscribed with the **Tetragrammaton** (Mid. Teh. 36:8). (This Midrash interprets the Hebrew word for "ornaments" as "armaments"—other Midrashim interpret this same reference as "crowns.") These weapons made them invulnerable, even to the **Angel of Death**. The weapons were taken back by God after the **golden calf** incident (Gen. 33:5; **Targum** S of S 2:17; Lam. R. petichta 24; Tanh. B. Vayera 5). The **zohar** suggests these same weapons first belonged to **Adam** and **Eve**, but for what purpose they needed them is not made clear (I:53b). In the War Scroll of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, the **Children of Light** will go forth to the great eschatological battle against the evil **Children of Darkness** wielding similar weapons.

In dealing with the contradictory statements in 1 Samuel, first that there were no weapons among the Israelites (13:19–20,22), but then that **Saul** and Jonathan had swords, the Midrash teaches that angels brought down swords from **heaven** for Saul and his son.

Though not technically a weapon, the miraculous **rod** of the Patriarchs still proved a potent tool against Israel's enemies. So, too, is the **Ark of the Covenant**. *SEE* BOW.; SWORD.

Weather: The **Bible** assumes God takes a direct role in causing and shaping the weather (Lev. 26:4; Nah. 1:3; Jon. 1:4; Hag. 1:11; 1 Kings 17:1). Righteous action, and even the intervention of righteous men, can alter weather patterns, especially bringing rain that has been otherwise withheld (Tan. 23a, 24b). Divining by means of the weather or the interpretation of cloud formations is mentioned in the **Talmud** (B.B. 147a). Later traditions teach how to prognosticate on the basis of weather that occurs on certain days or in conjunction with certain astral phenomena. *SEE* ASTROLOGY; BRONTOLOGY; DIVINATION; SEASONS; RAIN; ZODIAC

Wedding: (נישוין/Nisuin, also Erusin; Kiddushin). The wedding is an important messianic ritual in Judaism, symbolizing a partial restoration of the Edenic ideal, a time when male and female were "one flesh." Jewish tradition teaches that it is only as part of a couple that an individual becomes fully human as God intended (Eruv. 18a; Ber. 61a; PdRE 12; Sot. 2a). **marriage** is also an event of cosmic **healing**, with the linking of a man and a woman in these lower worlds initiating an analogous **Tikkun** in the **Godhead** (Zohar III:19a, 44b).

Many spiritual forces, both beneficent and malevolent, are in play around a wedding. The most propitious day for a wedding is Tuesday, the third day of the week, the day that God blessed twice (Gen. 1). **Fish** is a favored **food** at a wedding ceremony, signifying both blessing and **fertility**. Other foods regarded as imbued with the power of sexual potency, such as **nuts**, are also eaten or thrown at the couple. In Talmudic times the wedding procession would be led by groomsmen carrying a hen and **cock**. Seven **blessings** are recited over the couple during the ceremony, ensuring good fortune. **Demons** , the **evil eye**, and even the **Angels of Death**, are attracted by the positive energies of the festivities (Ber. 54b).

The state of marriage especially brings a state of spiritual protection to the man (Yev. 62b), but since at least the period of the book of Tobit, it has been believed that the bridegroom is particularly vulnerable to malevolent attack during the liminal period surrounding the wedding. For this reason, the groom often wears a kittel , or shroud robe during the ceremony in order to confuse the evil eye. Often, both bride and groom fast prior to the ceremony based on the same logic. It is also customary for the bride to walk in a series of protective circles around the groom before they enter under the chuppah (the wedding canopy) together. The skin of Oriental Jewish brides is decorated with **red** protective patterns made from henna.

It is considered bad luck to mention any future joyous occasion, such as the **birth** of children, during a wedding (Eccl. R. 3:2). It has been widely argued that the breaking of a glass after the ceremony also has an anti-demonic function, though there is no documented reference to this in traditional literature. *SEE* SEX; WOMEN.

Weeping: (בכיה/Bekhi). Jewish tradition has always valued weeping as a great tool for maintaining spiritual equilibrium. As the Yiddish proverb goes, “Tears are to the **soul** what soap is to the **Body**.” The tears of the **Righteous** have the power of **Torah**; in some cases, they even turn into words of Torah when they fall.[1] Despite the disapproval of some Talmudic Sages (Shab. 30a), there is a well-developed element of Jewish thought that take the idea of tears cleansing the soul quite seriously (A.Z. 17a). weeping is a widely practiced mystical technique for inducing revelations and **visions** (II Enoch; Zohar I:4a; Zohar II:14; Zohar III:166b; Sefer ha-Hezyonot) and inducing God to respond to supplications (Ber. 34b; Zohar II:20a). In the **Zohar** we are told:

> If a person grieves and sheds tears for the death of Aaron's two sons, God declares, "Your sin has left and your iniquity has been atoned for" [Isa. 6:7] … all those that are pained from those righteous who have died, or who sheds tears for them, God proclaims over him, "Your sins are removed, your iniquities atoned for." (Zohar III:57b)

The significance of weeping in Zohar is complex and wide-ranging, often being the necessary precursor to revealing a divine **secret**, a marker that the revealer is spiritual cognizant of the awesome nature of what he is about to do and appears in many phases of Jewish mystical tradition.[2]

Jews ritually weep and mourn for the destruction of the **Temple**, an act that comforts the **Shekhinah** and draws it down to the worshipper (Reshit Chochmah). Hasidic figures like the Kotzker Rebbe and the Seer of Lublin encouraged weeping as a spiritual discipline. Menachem Mendel of Kotzk emphasized the spiritual practice of "holy sadness" in his teachings and the Seer of Lublin encouraged **ritual** weeping at midnight.[3]

1. N. Polen, "Sealing the Book with Tears: Divine Weeping on Mount Nebo and in the Warsaw Ghetto," *Holy Tears*, Hawley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).
2. E. Fishbane, "Tears of Disclosure: The Role of Weeping in Zoharic Narrative," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 11 (2002): 25–47
3. Idel, *Kabbalah*, 75–88.

Well: (מעין, בור). Wells are ancient symbols of life, wealth, **fertility**, salvation, and tellurian power. The Sages identify two miraculous well incidents in the biblical accounts: the well that appeared for Hagar (Gen. 21), and the mobile well that the prophet Miriam made manifest during the forty years of wandering in the **wilderness** following the **Exodus** (Avot 5:6; Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, 3:53–54). One tradition claims these were actually the same well, a supernal creation made on the twilight of the sixth day. *SEE* WATER.

Well of Job: A small fountain in the Kidron Valley of **Jerusalem**. Like most **water** sources in the Holy Land, it is credited with miraculous powers. In this instance, its waters once healed **Job** of his boils, a **miracle** from which the spring derives its name.

Well of Miriam: This miraculous mobile well was one of the ten miracles on the twilight of the sixth day:

> Ten things were created on the eve of Shabbat at twilight. These are: the mouth of the earth [that swallowed Korach]; the mouth of the well [of

> Miriam]; the mouth of [Balaam's] ass; the **rainbow**; the manna; the staff [of Moses]; the Shamir; and the writing, the inscription and the tablets [of the Ten Commandments] (Avot 5:6).

Created in the form of a rock, the well provided Israel with **water** throughout their forty years in the **wilderness**. These waters also had the power to heal. At the end of each Sabbath, the well replenished itself for the week. Whenever the Israelites moved, Miriam would cause it to materialize in the new campsite (LOTJ III: 50–54; AdRN 5:6). When Miriam died, the rock lost its miraculous quality, precipitating the crisis at Meribah in which moss found himself in a confrontation with the children of Israel over the lack of water (Num. 20, 27).

In at least one thread of the tradition, the well actually has appeared in other times and places, particularly for Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 21).

Well Poisoning: *SEE* POISON.

Werewolf: (πlwwrw). The **Baal Shem Tov** did battle with a demonic werewolf (ShB 4). Werewolves are most often mentioned in medieval writings as part of a complex of **witche**/**vampire**/shape-changing traditions, especially in Sefer Chasidim.

West: (קדם, מערב). The direction from which fulfillment and redemption flows (Bahir 110–16). It also signifies the **Shekhinah**:

> [The west] is the constant abode of the Shekhinah. As Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: Let us be grateful to our ancestors for showing us the place of prayer, as it is written, "The heavenly hosts bow to You [i.e., the heavenly objects 'descend' in the west]." (Neh. 9:6; B.B. 25a)

Wheels: (**אופנים/Ofanim**). *SEE* OFAN, OFANIM.

White: *SEE* COLOR.

White Herb: A plant used in **alchemy** first mentioned by Maria Hebraea. It is probably Moonwort, botrychium lunaria. Alchemists find many medicinal and magical uses for this plant. A "white flower" is also an ingredient used in making **incense** for **exorcisms**, but it is not clear whether this is the same plant.

Wilderness: (מדבר/midbar). **Talmud** tractate Berachot identifies deserts, ruins, and other uninhabited areas as the places where demonic and **unclean spirits** like to frequent. This sense of the spiritually untamed wilderness may spring

from biblical concepts of **chaos** as a force in opposition to God, as well as the **Yom Kippur** ritual of sending the scapegoat to **Azazel**. *SEE* DEMONS; GOAT.

William of Norwich: Supposed victim of Jewish ritual murder in England (1144). His was the first recorded case of the blood libel accusation. The boy's head was allegedly shaven and wounds from a "crown of thorns" were found on his brow. The boy became an instant local martyr. Remarkably, little was done to the Jewish community of Norwich, apparently because the local constabulary judged the popular hysteria surrounding William's death to be unfounded. At the same time, the populous (for once) proved too law-abiding to take matters into their own hands. Subsequent Jewish communities would not be so lucky.

Willow: (ערבה/Aravah). Willow is one of the four species that make up the lulav. In the **ritual** of the holiday of Hashanah Rabbah that follows **Sukkot**, the willow branch is separated from the other branches and is used to flog the **Earth**, for that is the day "the earth is judged for the **water** to be received." As a plant that thrives near moisture, it is believed that using the willow in this sympathetic theurgic ceremony ensures the earth will be adequately watered. The willow is also seen as a talisman of **fertility** because of its link to the water ritual, and a Jewish couple may keep one under their bed to ensure **conception** (R.H. 1:2).

Wind: (רוח/Ruach). Winds coming from the four compass points symbolize the whole, wide world. The winds originate in storehouses of **heaven** and emanate from the "corners," or cardinal compass directions, of the earth (Jer. 49; Dan. 7:2, 11; Zech. 6). According to the **Bible**, winds are angels that fulfill God's will (Ps. 104:4; Ex. 10, 14; Isa. 26:6; Deut. R. 9:3). Wind is a manifestation of divine Presence (Gen. 1; Isa. 11:2–3; Git. 31b; B.B. 25a).

The word ruach is also used to refer to several other phenomena, both natural and supernatural: human breath, the imminent presence of God, an evil or demonic entity and one aspect of the **soul**. *SEE* DEMONS; HOLY SPIRIT; UNCLEAN SPIRITS OR IMPURE SPIRITS.

Wine: (יין/Yi'in). The very existence of wine was an event of supernatural origins. A **Midrash** on Genesis 9:21 claims **Satan** introduced **Noah** to viniculture, with dire consequences (Tanh. Noah 13). Despite this inauspicious start, wine occupies a very positive role in Jewish thought. As a symbol of rejoicing and prosperity, wine is a frequent element in Jewish **rituals**. Not surprisingly, some theurgic meanings have been ascribed to this practice, and more overtly magical uses for wine have emerged.

The custom of dipping one's finger in the wine cup and removing drops of wine while reciting the **plagues** at the Passover Seder may have its origins in a medieval theurgic ceremony. Rhineland sage Eliezer ha-Gadol taught that removing sixteen drops in this way would trigger the Sixteen-Sided Avenging Sword of the Almighty. This force would thwart the power of **Dever**, the **demon** of pestilence.[1] Sometimes wine was poured on the ground at birth ceremonies and **Wedding**s to satisfy the spirits who had been attracted to the joyous occasion.[2] Havdalah wine smeared on the eyelids brings good luck in the coming week.

German Pietist believed reciting certain **incantations** over wine enhanced their memorization of **Torah** studies. Wine was also used by magical practitioners. Methods found in Hebrew magical texts include using wine to dissolve magical incantations and then drinking the solution to absorb their power (ShR).

1. Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*, 138–39.
2. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 166–67, 195.

Wisdom: (חכמה/Chochmah). Wisdom is one of the attributes Jews value most. **Solomon** is celebrated for his wisdom, and he in turn offers many paeans to it in the biblical book of Proverbs. Wisdom was the object most treasured by Solomon, and because he asked for it over **gold** and silver, those were given to him also, and more. His supernal wisdom allowed him to become a celebrated judge and the archetypal scholarly sorcerer (S of S R. 1:1).

In Solomon's Proverbs, Wisdom is personified as a woman **prophet** who lives in a **palace** of seven pillars (1:20, 9:1–6). She is also described as a desirable bride. child-bearer, and life-giver (Prov. 3:16, 3:18, 3:22, and 4:13). In Hellenistic Judaism, Wisdom takes on a quasi-divine quality:

> For in her there is a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle;
> mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible,
> beneficent, human, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful,
> overseeing all and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent and pure and most subtle.
> For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things. (*Wisdom of Solomon* 7:22–24)

Arguments have been put forward that Wisdom is really a Pagan goddess refashioned for monotheistic sensibilities.[1] There is little direct evidence for this.

Proverbs 3:8 does characterize Wisdom as a "**Tree of Life** ," which may be a link to the Canaanite goddess Asherah, who was sometimes symbolized by a sacred **trees**/**totem** pole. We also now have one piece of evidence, an ancient piece of graffiti, which refers to "YHVH and His asherah." If one then returns to Proverbs starting at 8:22, there Wisdom is portrayed as a kind of consort to God. If one looks past the fact that Proverbs clearly designates Wisdom as one of God's creations, those inclined to connect these dots can find an occult goddess tradition concealed within.

Personified Wisdom continues to appear in post-biblical Jewish writings such as II **Enoch** (30:8), and **Dead Sea Scrolls** texts. Jewish Gnostics made the female Sophia a central figure in their beliefs.

In rabbinic tradition the Sages fuse Wisdom with other hypostatic, semi-divine entities that they explicitly characterized as female. **Torah**:

> Thus God consulted the Torah and created the world, while the Torah declares, "In the beginning God created," "beginning" referring to the Torah, as in the verse, "Adonai made me [in the passage, this refers to 'Wisdom'] as the beginning of His way." (Prov. 8:22; Gen. R. 1:1)

and the **Shekhinah** (Job 28; Mid. Mish. 8; Gen. R. 1:1). In **Kabbalah** , Chochmah is one of the **sefirot**, the first **emanation** of **Keter**. It is the highest any human can hope to reach in devekut, mystical union with God.

1. Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 98.

Witch and Witchcraft: (מכשף/Mechashef). "Wizard, Mechashefah Witch." In most cultures across the world, a witch or wizard is generally regarded to be a nefarious practitioner of magic, or "witchcraft." In Jewish culture, in contrast to both modern culture, which has reversed most images of evil creatures (**vampires** are now romantic figures, for example, instead of blood-lusting killers) and Christian culture, which sees them as virtually demonic, the Jewish attitude toward witches has varied considerably over time and geography. The **German Pietist** , for example, did regard them as quasi-**demons** . In the 17th century, Manasseh ben Israel of Holland expressed a view of witchcraft virtually indistinguishable from contemporary Christian demonologists (Nishmat Chayyim 232). The Talmudic Rabbis, on the other hand, while not approving of witches, blithely assume most of their own wives engage in at least some witchcraft practices (M. Sanh. 7:4, 7:11). These differences may well reflect the attitudes of the surrounding cultures in which Jews lived. Mediterranean societies were generally more tolerant of witches than northern European

societies.[1]

The formal biblical attitude toward wizards and witches is severe, being a capital offense (Ex. 22:17; Lev. 20:27; Sanh. 45b). This seems to spring from witchcraft's association with **idolatry**. Both men and **women** are portrayed as engaging in witchcraft, and contrary to the modern distinction made in academic circles between socially empowered sorcerers and socially marginal witches, witches in the **Bible** are often shown in positions of power, notably the wizards in the employ of the kings of **Babylon** and **Egypt** and the witches in the employ of King Manasseh. Queen **Jezebel** herself is a witch (Ex. 7:11; Dan. 2:2; 2 Kings 9:22, 21:2).

Little is known about biblical witchcraft. There is an oblique reference to "**voodoo**-like" practices (Ezek. 13:19), but the Bible almost universally opts to remain silent on the particular practices of the witch. The woman of Endor, often identified as a witch in Jewish post-biblical literature, is not designated so in the Bible itself, so it is not clear whether **necromancy** was considered a discipline of witchcraft, or a wholly separate offense (Deut. 18:10–12; Isa. 8:19–22, 19:3).

Jewish sources offer several accounts of the origins of witchcraft. According to **I Enoch** and Testament of Reuben, witchcraft was first taught by the **fallen angel** to their mortal wives. This presumably explains the special association between women and witchcraft that marks subsequent Jewish literature. In the medieval text Alef-Bet of ben Sira, the first woman, **Lilith**, transforms herself into a demon/witch by the power of using the **Tetragrammaton**.

While Jews were generally regarded to be exceptional magicians and even some Rabbis use **incantations**, potions , and **healing** rituals, in rabbinic literature witchcraft is most associated with women. Though there is an explicit statement that both men and women can engage in witchcraft, the fact that Exodus 22:17 prohibits Mechashefah (the feminine form of the noun) is taken as a prooftext that witchcraft is a particularly feminine activity:

> Our Sages learned: "witch" refers to both males and females. Why then does it [the biblical prohibition] state "witch" (rather than "wizard")? It is because most women are involved in witchcraft. (Sanh. 67a)

And this is despite the existence of magical manuals such as the **Sword Of Moses**, which is clearly written with the assumption that the adept using it will be a man. Perhaps a distinction between learned **sorcery** (practiced mostly by men), and folk magic (practiced mostly by women) starts to emerge here. Several passages of **Talmud** make a point of linking witchcraft with women,

though in context and purpose of these passages are less about the women then an effort to warn off men from certain behaviors around women, such as engaging in the then still legal practice of polygamy:

> The more possessions, the more worry; the more wives, the more witchcraft; the more female slaves, the more promiscuity. (Avot 2:7; Also see Eruv. 64b; J. A.Z. 1:9)

In one citation, none other than Simon bar Yochai, a Sage who is reported to have once used the **evil eye** to slay a man, makes this linkage. The practice of witchcraft was considered so pervasive among women that even the children of great Sages could be involved (Git. 45a).

In general, witches in biblical and rabbinic literature are thought to be engaged mostly in malevolent activities, from interfering with **fertility** and healthy **births** to **cursing** rivals and killing the unsuspecting**:**

> She was a gadabout woman who was considered by people to be a good person. But she was a witch who invoked witchcraft upon every pregnant woman in order to prevent her from giving birth. Then, when the woman's labor pains were very great, this widow would come and say: "I will pray to God for you to give birth immediately." She would then go to her home and take away the witchcraft, and the woman would give birth immediately. Thus people thought she was righteous and pious, and the pregnant women would go to her before they were due to give birth and entreated her to pray for them. One day, though, she left her home and left behind a young lad to guard her home. He heard a sound of movement within the house, and he saw nothing but merely heard a sound. He then went and searched and found a full barrel which was covered. He uncovered it, and found the witchcraft within the barrel, and her wickedness and disgusting behavior were exposed, and the witchcraft was annulled. From that day on, the women no longer needed her, and the people of the city banished her from their midst. (*Otzer ha-Geonim*, c.f. Sotah 11) [2]

This stands in contrast with beneficent sorcery, such as healing rituals and **amulet** making, which Jewish tradition tolerates. While there are examples recorded of "witchcraft" that serves purely utilitarian purposes (the ability to stir a boiling pot with one's bare **hand**, for example), in general it is assumed witchcraft is used mostly for nefarious ends. The motivation for such behavior is rarely explicitly stated in the texts, but can be inferred. Witches seem to be a

source of the evil eye, indicating they are motivated by envy and jealousy. Others use their powers for personal profit.[3]

Witches are sometimes portrayed as having idiosyncratic powers: one may be able to materialize **bread** , another drink, etc. The Talmud recounts that Rabbi Simeon ben Shetah defeated a coven of eighty witches. First, he tricked them into demonstrating their powers, then he gained the upper hand by appealing to their lusts. He brought eighty men before them, each of whom lifted a witch from the ground, thereby robbing each of her power (a piquant detail linking ancient witchcraft with earth or, perhaps, underworld power). Enforcing the biblical penalty, ben Shetah eventually had all of them hung. While dramatic in scale, this incident is actually the only such capital punishment of witches mentioned in the entire vast rabbinic corpus, and given its particularly legendary features, many scholars have held the historicity of the story suspect.

Aside from this one story, witches in rabbinic literature are rarely portrayed as demonic creatures, though it is not clear exactly what they are. In a virtually indecipherable tale found in the Jerusalem Talmud, Rabbi Hananiah pulls the head of a witch from flax (Sanh. 13a). In general, though, witchcraft is seen more as a vice that virtually every woman will indulge in. With few exceptions, it is regarded rather just as something inappropriate that women do.

In medieval Jewish literature of northern Europe, by contrast, the image of the witch as a purely malevolent entity comes to the forefront, perhaps reflecting the greater hostility toward witches found in Christian culture at that time (Nishmat Chayyim 232). In Sefer Chasidim, witches share attributes with **werewolves** and **vampires**: they shape-shift, fly, have bloodlust, and can become the undead (456, 465). Yet despite this more alarming view of witches, there is no record of any large-scale witch hunts among the Jews of Europe to mirror the witch-hunting mania that seized gentile society. Perhaps the popular Christian notion of the Jew as a satanic agent made Jewish authorities leery of giving fuel to such talk with the spectacle of Jews trying other Jews on such charges.

Among the Jews of the Ottoman Empire, witches were viewed with more acceptance. Even an established Kabbalist like **Chayyim Vital** would seek the expertise of such wise women (Sefer ha-Hezyonot 4, 120).

The threat of a witch may be deterred by reciting the following **curse**: “May boiling excrement in a sieve be forced into your mouth, [you] witches! May your head go bald and carry off your crumbs; your spices be scattered, and the wind carry off the new saffron in your hands, witches!” (Pes. 110a). Seven loops of

knots [tied to the left side of the **Body**] are also a good defense against illness caused by witchcraft (Shab. 66b).

1. L. A. Homza, *Religious Authority in the Spanish Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 176–209.

2. M. Bar-Ilan, "Witches in the Bible and in the Talmud," *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press (1993), 7.

3. Ibid., 1–12.

Women: (נשים). Despite the clearly patriarchal nature of traditional Jewish culture, Jewish tradition provides a wide range of images of women: wives, mothers, daughters, harlots, warriors, **prophet**, leaders, entrepreneurs, **witches**, seductresses, and sages. In the **Bible**, women personify both **wisdom** and witchcraft. While women are often portrayed as especially devious, indirect, and manipulative, that quality is often used for godly purposes (Rebecca in Genesis, Yael in Judges, the Wise Woman of Tokea in 1 Samuel, and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel all being signal examples). Women are also a source of discord among men because of male lust— the first murder, Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer claims, was actually a fight over Abel's twin sister (PdRE 21). It is also the case that some Sages show a marked misogyny (Gen. R. 18:2).

The **Talmud** identifies seven biblical women upon whom "the **Holy Spirit** rested" (i.e., they were prophets). Those were **Sarah**, Miriam, Deborah, Channah, Abigail, Huldah, and Esther. According to the **Zohar**, there are four women who have been translated living into **heaven** and each of them governs one of the seven heavenly **palaces** (other sources speak of six palaces for women). There the **souls** of righteous women are rewarded. The women are Yocheved, the mother of **Moses**, Miriam, his sister, and the prophetesses Serach bat Asher and Deborah. Other versions of this list of ascendant women include Batya, the daughter of Pharaoh, Moses's adoptive mother (SGE; Zohar III:167a–b; Midrash Yashar).

Jewish women have functioned as folk healers throughout history. Generally excluded from the scholarly circles that produced "physicians" in the learned tradition, women nevertheless were the avid practitioners and teachers of folk **healing**, midwifery, **divination**, clairvoyance, and **amulet** making.[1]

Because of the monthly cycle of menstruation, women are considered a potential source for tamei, ritual impurity. At least one extreme sectarian Jewish group believed the ritual impurity of women was such that women should not be allowed permanent residence in **Jerusalem**, lest their presence undermine the holiness of the **Temple** (DSS Temple Scroll).

This was also a concern with women in theurgic and magical practices. Most handbooks of mystical-magical practices instruct the adept to avoid even talking to women for three days prior to performing a summoning or an ascent, apparently out of concern that even the most innocuous contact could trigger sexual arousal and seminal discharge.

In Jewish accounts of spiritual **possession**, women are predominantly (though far from exclusively) the hosts for possessing spirits, both beneficent and malevolent. Women could also be the targets of **incubi**, lustful spirits (Nishmat Chayyim 3:27). From the 16th century on, women became prominent **mediums**. Some, such as the daughter of Raphael Anav, were possessed by the spirit of a great sage with insight into the supernal realms (**maggid**or **ibbur** tov). Intriguingly, possession by such an ibbur granted the possessed woman an authoritative religious "voice" she might not otherwise have enjoyed in the Jewish community[2] (Sefer ha-Hezyonot 23–24; Divrei Yosef 319–24). *SEE* MENSTRUATION.; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY

1. Chajes, "Women Leading Women (and Attentive Men)," 9–40.

2. Faierstein, "Maggidim, Spirits, and Women in Rabbi Hayyim Vital's 'Book of Visions,' " in Goldish, *Spirit Possession in Judaism*, 188–95.

Wood: *SEE* TREE; WILLOW.

Wood Offering, Festival of: A holiday on the fifteenth of Av mentioned in the **Temple** Scroll (23) of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. It is a holiday only vaguely attested to in later Jewish tradition and may have been simply part of an idealized, rather than actual, **calendar** featured in that text. There is some biblical basis for it, though (Neh. 10:34–40).

Word Mysticism: *SEE* HEBREW AND HEBREW ALPHABET

Words of Gad the Seer, the: (**Divrei Gad ha-Chozen**). A little-known manuscript, it purports to be the work of Gad, a **prophet** who served King **David**. In it, Gad describes an apocalypse of **heaven** and the End of Days granted him by God.

World: (עולם/Olam). The word **Olam** is derived from the Hebrew root for "hidden," and may have originally meant "horizon." It has come to mean both "world" (in the planetary sense) and "universe" (the sum total of **Creation**). Olam also has both spatial and temporal connotations. Thus ha-olam is "the world," while le-olam means "forever." The word itself is derived from the root ayin lamed-mem, "hidden," reflecting the mystical teaching that the universe is

the “**garment**” of God. Like **heaven** and **Gehenna**, the material world is divided into seven levels (AdRN 37; Lev. R. 29:10–11). God created many worlds prior to this one (Gen. R. 37:9:2; Mid. Teh. 90:13)

It is a common locution to divide the universe into “Upper” and “Lower” Worlds, the celestial (Elyonim) and the terrestrial (Tachtonim). The lower universe is like a shadow cast by the upper world, and all things manifest below are reflections of higher, greater realities. *SEE* ADAM KADMON; CREATION; EARTH; FOUR WORLDS OF EMANATION; WORLDS, MANY.

World to Come: (עולם הבא/Olam ha-Ba; Alma de-Atei). A general term for those spiritual realms in which humanity will one day be a part, Isaiah 64:3 is occasionally cited as the biblical textual source for the concept. Sometimes it refers to a perfect reality that is temporally in the future (i.e., the messianic Kingdom of God), which will follow the advent of the **Messiah**, a period of interregnum between the advent of the Messiah and the end of the world (Pes. 68a; Ber. 34b; Sanh. 91b). Its duration is indeterminate, with periods as short as forty and as long as a thousand years being proposed (Sanh. 99a). In this renewed **Creation**, ten things will change: The supernal light of first Creation will return, living waters that heal will flow forth from **Jerusalem**, fruit-bearing **trees** with **healing** powers will sprout from those waters, all the ruined cities will be rebuilt, Jerusalem will be completely rebuilt out of precious materials, harmony will reign in the animal kingdom and between **animals** and humans, suffering will be swept from the world, **Death** will be swallowed up, and all human beings will know wholeness and contentment (Ex. R. 15:2).

At other times the World to Come refers to a temporally current spiritual world that surrounds the material world and is the place of the afterlife (Shab. 152a; Tanchuma, Vayikra 8; Bahir 106; MT, Hilchot Teshuvah 8:8). In this interpretation, it is mysterious and beyond our ken (Ber. 17a; Ex. R. 52:3). In Zohar it emanates from the sefirah of Binah (3:290b). It is a place of unending bliss, though some contrary Sages express some dialectic tension over this. They apparently thought the World to Come was less interesting and rewarding than this world, since there will be little to do there and no **commandments** to fulfill (Ber. 17a).

Whatever its true configuration, the **Righteous** of every nation have a portion in the World to Come (J. Yev. 15:2; Ber. 17a; B.B. 75a; Shab. 152b; Sanh. 90a; Tos. Sanh. 13:12; MT, Hilchot Melachim, 8:11; Tiferet Israel, Yachin, Sanh. 10:2). *SEE* ETERNAL LIFE; HEAVEN; SOUL

Worlds, Many: The belief that this is not the first or only world, that God created and destroyed multiple creations prior to this one, is both well established and long-standing in Jewish tradition. The teaching that God created multiple worlds before forming this world first appears in Genesis Rabbah**:**

> And there was evening [the Hebrew can be read to suggest "evening" refers to a prior reality]: hence we know a time order existed before this. R. Abihu said: This proves the Blessed Holy One went on creating worlds and destroying them until He created this one … This is Abbahu's reason: And God saw everything that He made and behold, it was very good [comparatively] (Gen. 1:31). [God is saying] This pleases me, but those [worlds] did not please me. (3:7)

The rabbis actually cite multiple biblical sources they believed hinted as the existence of prior worlds: Genesis 3:7 and 9:2 and Isaiah 65:17, but most often Genesis 2:4:

> Now these are the generations of the **heaven** and **Earth** when they [rather than "it"] were created.

The actual number of worlds is not specified, but the sages agree that they endured long enough to yield almost a thousand generations of **souls** ; a thousand according to one reading, based on Psalm 105:8; 974 according to another. The latter number is based on the biblical account that **Noah** was the twenty-sixth generation of [this] creation, and since the Sages teach that Solomon was referring to Noah when he wrote, "Only one man in a thousand have I found …"(Eccl. 7:28), they deduct 26 from 1000 and get 974 (Gen. R. 28:4). 974 becomes the working number for prior creations in many subsequent retellings of this legend:

> R. Joshua b. Levi also said: "When Moses ascended on high, the ministering angels spoke before the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Sovereign of the Universe! What business has one born of woman amongst us?' 'He has come to receive the Torah,' answered He to them. Said they to Him, 'That secret treasure, which has been hidden by Thee for nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the world was created.' " (Shab. 88b. Also see Mid. Teh. 90:13)

Chagigah 13b also offers the piquant tradition that God did not jettison those earlier generations of souls, but continues to **reincarnate** them into the unfolding generations of this world.

The "many worlds" tradition continues to be reiterated and repurposed in various ways throughout the tradition (PdRE 3; Zohar I:24a–b; Or ha-Hayyim 1:12). In Hasidic tradition, the existence of prior worlds is revealed by the fact that the account of this creation begins with bet, the second letter of the Hebrew alef-bet (Gen. 1:1).[1]

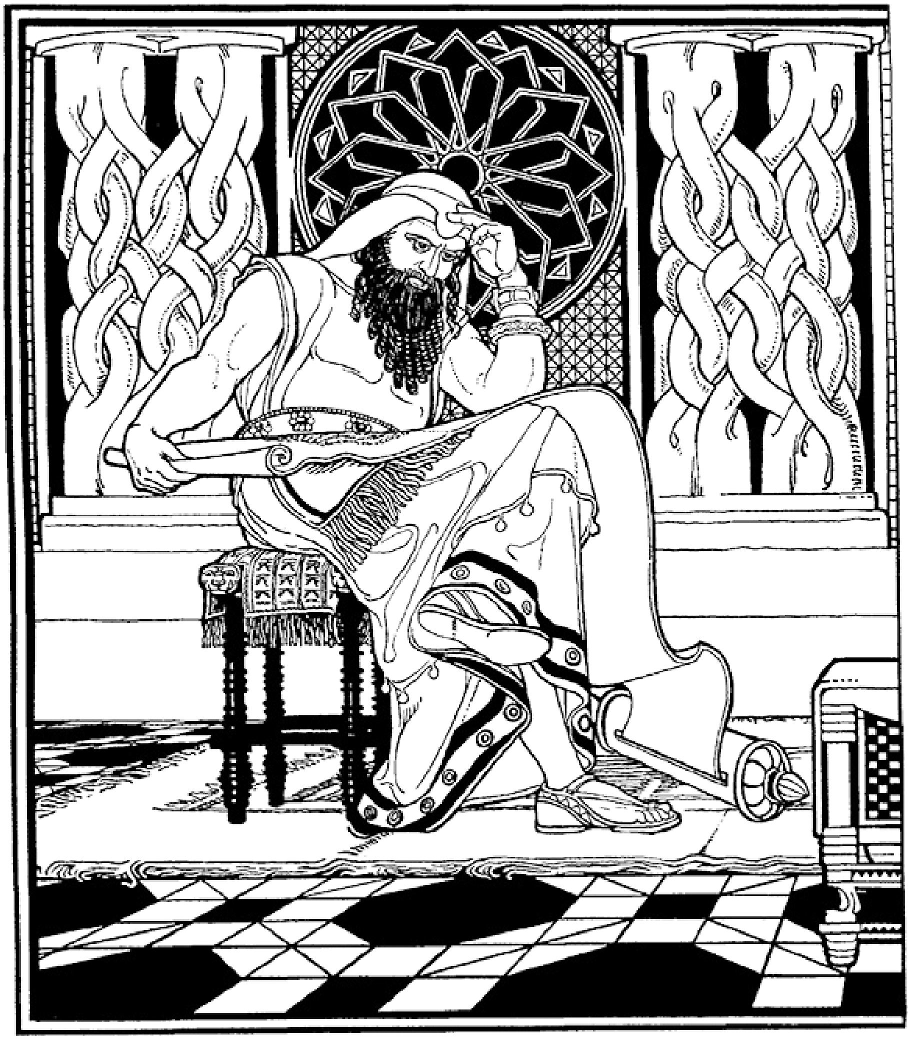
This tradition of diachronic universes exists along-side synchronic traditions of multiple worlds, which also exists in Jewish tradition in the **four worlds** and **seven heavens** and the seven **Earth** (Lev. R. 29:11; SGE; LOTJ p15). *SEE* REINCARNATION.

1. Schwartz, *Tree of Souls*, 71.

Wunder-rabbi: (Yiddish). A term, sometimes used pejoratively, for a faith healer or **Baal Shem**.

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X



Xenoglossia and Automatic Writing: (שם הדורש/Shem ha-Doresh; שם הכותב/Shem ha-Kotev). Xenoglossia is the phenomenon of alien spirits speaking through or out of a possessed person while in a **trance**; "channeling." Such experiences may have been part of some prophetic trances, though evidence for this in the Hebrew **Bible** is sparse and elliptical at best. The first explicit accounts appear in the Christian New Testament, where there are descriptions of both demonic spirits addressing Jesus and seizure by the **Holy Spirit** resulting in people "speaking in tongues." Later Jewish sources also equate automatic speech with **Prophecy** (Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim). Xenoglossia is a defining characteristic of ghostly and angelic possession in most Jewish reports after the 15th century. Joseph Taitazak provides the first detailed account of this phenomenon.[1] Perhaps the most famous Jew to experience it was Joseph Caro.

A parallel phenomenon is that of "automatic writing," composing while in an altered state of consciousness. This phenomenon is sometimes thought to be inspired by the incident in Daniel of the "writing on the wall," though the biblical account doesn't actually describe a spiritual possession.

Moses de Leon is a notable example, as there are indications he wrote parts of the **Zohar** while in a trance.[2] Post-Zohar, medieval mystics describe it as the shem ha-kotev, "the writing Name." This divine name can be invoked, sometimes through the angels **Gabriel** and **Michael**, to trigger the trance-induced writing (Sha'arei Tzedek). Sources mention the practice, but do not record the actual "name," though Taitazak provides some details:

> The secret of this supernal writing is the secret of the descent of the power of God in His glory … the secret included in this writing should be believed by everyone … for it is prophecy and will come true fully … you shall understand the secret of the "writing name," guided by an angel, whenever you wish it … It should begin by two days of fasting, and on the third day should be performed. The person doing it should not drink any wine and he should eat on that day only after performing the practice. Before that he should eat three eggs, to give him the power for the Names. It should be performed in the morning and after midnight … [3]

This description of **ritual** preparation is almost stereotypical of Jewish rituals of power, with parallel features (fasting a number of days, but especially the eggs) that appear in **Hechalot** texts and in magical texts as well. Samson Ostropoler also described the Shem ha-Doresh, the "Name of Inquiry," a form of automatic speech.[4] *SEE* DEVEKUT; IBBUR; MAGGID; MEDIUM; POSSESSION

1. Patai, "Exorcism and Xenoglossia Among the Safed Mystics," 314–25; also see Bilu, "Dybbuk and Maggid," 255–57.
2. Matt, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 1, lxxv, xxiv.
3. Dan, *The Heart and the Fountain*, 177–180.
4. Twersky and Septimus, *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, 221–55.

Y

Yachad: (יחד). “Togetherness/Community/Union.” This is the term that the sectarian **priests** of the **Dead Sea Scrolls** sect used to describe their fellowship. The term, however, refers to vertical as well as horizontal unity, for the **Qumran** priests believed that they experienced periodic mystical unity and intermingling with **angels** through their **ritual** and liturgy (4Q405). *SEE* SONGS OF THE SABBATH SACRIFICE.

Yagel, Abraham: Renaissance physician and sorcerer (Italian, ca. 16th century). A proponent of scholarly magic in the style of the non-Jewish Hermetic schools, Yagel reconciled those ideas with many Jewish esoteric traditions. He believed knowledge of **sorcery** to be the apex of a philosophic education. He wrote extensively on spiritualism—demonology, spiritual **healing**, **dreams**, and the influences of the stars on human health—as it relates to medicine and the sciences. He is the author of Beit Yaar ha-Levanon, which exists only in manuscript form.[1] *SEE* ASTROLOGY; MAGIC; SORCERY.

1. Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science*.

Yah, Yahu: (יה, יהו). A shortened version of the **Tetragrammaton**, it appears occasionally in the **Bible**, as in hallelu-Yah, and in **Hebrew names**, like Eli-Yahu. It is a divine name that is frequently integrated into **incantations** and **amulets**. *SEE* NAMES OF GOD.

Yahoel: (יהואל). “Yah is God.” A powerful **angel** that appears in **Hechalot** literature and on protective **amulets**.

Yalkut Shimoni: A medieval **Midrash** collection containing many supernatural and fantastic elements.

Yannai, Rabbi: Talmudic Sage and theurgist (ca. 3rd century). He once caught a **witch**who tried to **poison** him with scorpions that had been magically disguised as a beverage. Turning the tables on her, he gave her a potion that shape-changed her into a donkey, which he then rode to the marketplace (Sanh. 67b).

Yashar, Sefer: A lost book mentioned in the **Bible**. Sefer ha-Yashar (or Toldot Adam) is also a chronology of history from **Adam** until the **Exodus**. It incorporates many rabbinic legends and fantastic elements.

Yechudaim: **Guardian angel** of the **Righteous**. He keeps images of the righteous in **heaven** (Zohar III:142a–b).

Yechidut: (יחידות). A Chasidic spiritual consultation.

Yeddioni: (ידעוני). "Wizard/Medium." Derived from the Hebrew "know," the name has the sense of one "familiar with" spirits or the dead. Such a person is punishable by **Death** in the **Bible**. According to the **Talmud**, a Yeddioni is a medium who places a bone in his **mouth** and then channels the voice of the dead spirit (Sanh. 65b). *SEE* GHOST; IBBUR; MEDIUM; NECROMANCY; POSSESSION; XENOGLOSSIA AND AUTOMATIC WRITING.

Yedid Nefesh: (ידיד נפש). "Beloved Soul." Mystical poem by 16th-century Kabbalist Rabbi Elazar Azikri that has become a liturgical standard of Jewish worship. This is usually sung on the eve of the **Sabbath** and the Seudah Sh'lishit, toward the end of Sabbath.

In common with other esoteric prayers, this piyut features: passionate, even erotic **language** to characterize the relationship with God; acrostic construction. In this case, the first Hebrew letter of each of the four stanzas combine to form the **Tetragrammaton**, the four-letter name of God; "light" imagery and synonyms for "beauty" to describe the divine; the occult motifs of things "concealed"and "revealed":

> י Soul's beloved, source of compassion, draw Your servant to your desire. Your servant will run like a gazelle; he will bow before your splendor. Your love is sweeter to him than the dripping of honey, or all tastes.
>
> ה Splendid, Beautiful, Radiance of the Universe, my soul is sick for Your love. Please, God, heal her [my soul] by showing her the beauty of your radiance. Then she will be strengthened and healed and she will have eternal bliss.
>
> ו Ancient One [Dan. 7:9], arouse Your mercy, and please have pity upon Your beloved child. For how I have yearned to swiftly see the splendor of Your strength. These are the desires of my heart so please have pity and do not hide Yourself.
>
> ה Please, reveal Yourself. Beloved, spread over me the shelter of your peace. Illumine the earth with Your glory, that we may exult and rejoice in You. For now comes the time grace us as in days of old.

The **language** emphasizes the sweetness [both sensuous and sensual] of divine encounter, a recurrent theme in medieval mystical writings cross-culturally; in this composition, it is drawing on the language of **Song of Songs**. Love sickness is also an image derived from Song of Songs.

Yefeiyah: (יפאיה). "Beautiful One of God." This **angel** may be identical with the Sar ha-Torah. He is the angel who actually presented the Torahs to **Moses** (BhM 1:61). Gedulat Moshe also identifies him as the angel Zagzagel. He is one of the instructors who teach Torah to the righteous dead. *SEE* YESHIVA SHEL MALAH.

Yenne Veldt: "Another World/Out of this World." This is a generic term for anything far out of the mainstream, but is also used to refer to spiritual dimensions, forces, and the occult.

Yeshiva shel Malah: (ישבה של מעלה). "The Academy on High." Also in Aramaic, *Metivta d'Rekia*. One of the rewards awaiting the righteous in the afterlife is to **study** and understand **Torah** in its supernal completeness. The realm where this takes place is known as the *beit hamidrash ba-olam ha-ba (*"The House of Study in the **World to Come**") or yeshiva shel malah ("the seminary on high"). The righteous dead will study there under the instruction of the angelic Sar ha-Torah known as Zagzagel, under **Metatron**, or under God's own tutelage (A.Z. 18; Gen. R. 49:2; B.M. 86a; Gedulat Moshe; Zohar I:4a–b). *SEE* DEATH; EDEN, GARDEN OF; PARADISE; RIGHTEOUS, THE.

Yesod: (יסוד). "Foundation/Phallus." The ninth sefirah. It is the conduit of divine **emanations** that flow into the material universe. It is also known as Tzadik. As the divine PHALLUS, it is the source of the vitality and sexuality that energizes this plane of existence, the world of Asiyah (Zohar**,** everywhere). It is associated with the person of **Joseph**.

Yetzer ha-Ra: (יצר הרע). Variously translated as the "Evil Impulse," the "Evil Desire," the "Selfish Desire" or just "Desire," the *Yetzer ha-Ra* is that aspect of nature, but especially human nature, which drives us to compete, to fight, to possess, but most of all to desire sexual gratification. Every human being is created with two impulses, the Good Impulse and the Evil Impulse (Ber. 61a; Kid. 30b).

Though it is counterbalanced by the *Yetzer ha-Tov,* the "altruistic desire," it is nonetheless the source of much of the grief in human life—lust, violence, selfishness, vengeance, and ambition. Every human must learn to manage his or

her impulse toward selfishness and evil, but a person should not seek to utterly destroy his or her Yetzer ha-Ra, for the Evil Impulse also motivates a person to pursue worthwhile goals: creativity, **marriage**, and creating a family:

> And [the Sages of the Great Assembly] cried with a great voice to Adonai their God (Neh. 9:4). What did they cry? … Woe, woe, it is he [the Yetzer ha-Ra] who has destroyed the Sanctuary, burnt the Temple, killed the righteous, driven all Israel into exile and is still dancing in our midst … You have surely given him to us that we may receive merit through him. We want neither him nor merit through him. In that moment a tablet fell from the firmament, the word "truth" inscribed upon it [Heaven accedes to the request] … They [the Sages] ordered a complete fast of three day … whereupon he [the Yetzer] was surrendered to them. He came forth from the Holy of Holies like a fiery lion … At that moment the prophet declared, "This is the Yetzer" … the prophet said, "cast him in a lead barrel" (Zech. 5:8) … He [the Yetzer] said to them, "Realize that if you kill me, the world is finished." They held him for three days, then they looked in the whole land of Israel and not an egg could be found. So they asked, "What shall we do now? …" So they put out his eyes and let him go; this helped in that men became less inclined to incest. (Yoma 69b)

The Yetzer ha-Ra is therefore a critical component in God's plan for humanity to be cocreators in the world. A person should love God with both Yetzers:

> And God saw all that He had made, and found it very good … *vehinei tov zeh yetzer hatov*, *vehinei tov me'od zeh yetzer hara*—"good" refers to the Good Inclination but "very good" refers to the Evil Inclination. Why? Because were it not for the Yetzer ha-Ra no one would build a house, take a wife, give birth, or engage in commerce. (Gen. R. 9:7; Sif. D. 32)

The **Talmud** teaches that the greater the person, the more powerful the Yetzer ha-Ra is within that person (Suk. 52a). One tradition equates the Yetzer ha-Ra with seven terms in Scripture: "evil," "uncircumcised," "unclean," "the enemy," "stumbling block," "stone," and "the hidden." Other traditions personify it by identifying it with **Satan** and/or the **Angels of Death** (B.B. 16a).

In **Kabbalah** it is characterized as an **angel** (Zohar I:144b), the arch-demon **Samael**, a "shadow Adam" (T.Z. 33cd), and Leviathan (Treatise of the Left Emanation).

The mystics treat the Yetzer ha-Ra as a metaphysical phenomenon, locating it not just in the divine order, but within divinity itself. Sefer ha-Bahir (162–64;

195), Zohar I:49a, and Sha'arei Orah VI.5, all establish the status of the Yetzer as a divine attribute, God's "left **hand**," and teach that a person could merge with the **Godhead** if one could but master it. The imagery of the two inclinations as "right" and "left," that is to say, superior and inferior (Num. R. 22), yet both essential to the divine goal of psycho-somatic integration, appears in Ezra ben Solomon of Gerona's commentary on **Song of Songs** (comment to Song 4:1). Moses Cordovero extends this physiological allegory with his interpretation of Song 2:6: "O that his left hand was under my head, that his right hand embraced me" (Tomar Devorah chap. 6).

In other kabbalistic works, the role of the inclination in human life perceived as more dualistic. Thus in other sections of Zohar, it is taught the only proper human response to the Yetzer is to reject it. The Yetzer is merely of a divine test of human will (II:163a–b), reflecting a more Manichean view than is found in rabbinic tradition (Sha'ar Ruach ha-Kodesh, 52).

Like **Death**, the Yetzer ha-Ra will finally be overthrown in the **World to Come** (Suk. 52a–b; Gen. R. 21:5). *SEE* EVIL.

Yetzirah: (יצירה). "Formation." The third of the **four worlds of emanation**. This is the source of all material forms, the domain of **angels**, and the place from which emotion emerges.

Yetzirah, Sefer: "Book of Formation/Creation." The most influential book of the Ma'asei-Bereshit mystical tradition, *Sefer Yetzirah*, was written sometime in Late Antiquity (probably between the 3rd and 6th centuries). Over eighty commentaries to it have come down to us across the centuries, many of them composed by prominent rabbinic figures. The book describes the thirty-two paths of wisdom, consisting of the twenty-two letters of the **Hebrew** alphabet and the ten **sefirot**. The book teaches that the letters of the alphabet are the building blocks out of which God constructs creations. The adept who masters the **secret** knowledge of the letters can also become a "lesser creator" even able to make a **golem**, or man-made anthropoid. *Sefer Yetzirah* is also deeply engaged by mystical mathematics. Tradition credits **Abraham** as its author, though there is no internal evidence for this.

YHWH or YHVH: (יהוה). *SEE* NAMES OF GOD; TETRAGRAMMATON.

Yichud/Yichudim: (יחוד). **Maimonides**put forward the argument that there is a mitzvat ha-yichud, a Jew is obligated to comprehend God's unity to maximum of one's intellectual capacity. By contrast, in Zoharic and Lurianic **Kabbalah** ,

yichud is any action or spiritual practice (mitzvah, kavanah, or hanganot) that theurgically effects or enhances the unity of God, either in the lower worlds, or on high (Zohar III:277a–b). It results in a **Tikkun**, an act of cosmic repair. It usually entails an action or **ritual** that harmonizes the forces of the **sefirot**. **Isaac Luria** would use the term to refer specifically to a ritual of incubation that was often performed at the grave of a **Righteous** man for the purpose of communing with him (Sha'ar Ruach ha-Kodesh 75).[1] In later practice, one effects unification in **prayer** through reciting a kavanah, a short declaration of intentionality, before reciting one's prayer (sha'ar ha-kavvanot I:78, 213–215). *SEE* IBBUR; INCUBATION; MEDIUM; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY; THEURGY.

1. Fine, "The Contemplative Practice of Yichudim in Lurianic *Kabbalah*," in Green, *Jewish Spirituality*, vol. 2, 79–80.

Yochanan bar Nappaha, Rabbi: Talmudic Sage and faith healer (ca. 3rd century). The **Talmud** repeatedly tells of his spectacular beauty; he literally lit up a room. Pregnant **women** would come to gaze on him in the belief that a measure of his beauty would be transmitted to their unborn children (*Ber*. 20a). He also had the power to heal with his touch (*Ber.* 5B). He taught on a wide array of esoteric topics: **angels**, **Creation**, **astrology**, **dreams**, and the **World to Come**.

Yod or Yud: (י). Tenth letter of the **Hebrew** alphabet, it has the numeric value of ten. Its linguistic value is variable, as it is a diphthong. Sometimes it is "y," other times it represents a short or long "e," or even a long "i" sound. It is one of the letters that make up the **Tetragrammaton**. It is a "form" or "foundation" letter, because other letters are made from its form.[1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 125–32.

Yofiel: (יופיאל). "The Beauty of God." An **angel** of revelation, sometimes identified as the Sar ha-Torah (Gedulat Moshe). *SEE* DINA; YEFEIYAH.

Yoga: Though the term "yoga" derives from Hinduism, the use of posture as a meditative technique is ancient to Judaism. Most famous of these is placing one's head between the knees for extended periods of time, the so-called "prophetic posture" (1 Kings 18:42; Ber. 34b; A.Z. 17a; Hechalot Zutarti). Kneeling and prostrating oneself are other examples. Judaism also makes extensive use of **Body** movement in prayer.

Yohani bat Retivi: A Jewish **witch**. Using acts of sympathetic **magic**, she tormented **women** in **childbirth** by shutting their wombs, only to come to them

in their distress and reap rewards for alleviating the condition that she herself created (Sot. 22a; ad. loc., RaSHI comment). She was exposed when a person visiting in her home unwittingly unstopped an enchanted bottle, thereby releasing her victim (Otzer ha-Geonim 11). *SEE* BIRTH; WITCH AND WITCHCRAFT..

Yom ha-Din: *SEE* END OF DAYS.

Yom Kippur: (יום כפור). "Day of Atonement." Regarded by many to be the holiest day of the Jewish sacred **calendar**, it is a time of **judgment**, contrition, and renewal.

In biblical times, Yom Kippur entailed the dramatic **ritual** of the High **priest** entering the Holy of Holies and making an **incense** offering while speaking the **Tetragrammaton**. It is also the day on which the scapegoat ritual is performed. Two identical **goats** are brought before the High Priest. By means of **lots**, one is selected to be sacrificed, while the other is sent to Azazel (Lev. 16). Whether Azazel is an entity, a locale or something else entirely is never resolved in Jewish tradition (RaSHI's and Nachmanides' comments on 16:8; Zohar I:114a).

According to the Sages, Yom Kippur is the only day when **Satan** is completely powerless (*Yoma* 20a). In one **Midrash**, the scapegoat ritual is explained as a bribe meant to co-opt **Samael**/Satan, who comes every Yom Kippur to accuse Israel before the **Throne of Glory**. The gift of the goat forces the Adversary (not unlike Balaam) to speak positively of the Jewish people instead (PdRE 46; Me'am Loez).

The ritual of kapparah is performed on the eve of the day as an act of substitution expiation. A **lamps** or **candle** can be used to divine whether a person will live through the coming year (Hor. 12a). If one **dreams** of Yom Kippur, it is an **omen** that the dreamer should **fast** in order to prevent some evil future event.

Yored Merkavah: (יורד מרכבה). "One who Descends [upon] the [Divine] Chariot." This is the term used in Ma'asei-Merkavah to describe a practitioner who makes a spiritual ascension into the heavenly realms. Scholars have been puzzled by the idiom itself; why does one not "go up" in the **chariot**, rather than "go down?" Certainly the preferred spatial metaphor in **Hechalot** literature is that **heaven** is "upward." There are three proposed answers. First, the idiom may allude to a meditative/trance act that triggers the journey—one must "go down" into one's self in order to make the ascent. Another explanation is that the mystic uses **water** as a medium for seeing the **vision** (the Israelites saw an awesome vision of God while surrounded by water, Ex. 15), so "descending" refers either

to looking down at, or partially immersing in, water.[1] Finally, it may be that the term does not actually refer to the ascent itself, but only to the moment when the adept is welcomed into the divine Presence and, having achieved a temporary angelic status, is invited to be enthroned in a Chariot-Throne like the one upon which God sits.[2] If this latter explanation is correct, then to be designated a "Yored Merkavah" is more than simply being a mystical adept—it is to be counted among the spiritual virtuosos of **Torah**, a truly elite title. *SEE* ASCENT, HEAVENLY.; MEDITATION; MERKAVAH; THRONE OF GLORY.

1. D. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot* (New York: SUNY Press, 1986), 237. Also see Schwartz, "Book of the Great Name," in Fine, J*udaism in Practice*, 340–47.

2. Wolfson, "Yeirdah ha-Merkavah: Typology of Enthronement and Ecstasy in Early Jewish Mysticism," in *Herrera*, 13–44.

Yossi, Abba: Exorcist (ca. 2nd century). One of the few Sages of the rabbinic period credited with performing an **exorcism**, he drove an evil spirit from a **water** source with the help of townspeople:

> Rabbi Berachya said: an incident in our town involved a (female) spirit settled on the spring. Along came a (male) spirit to mate with her and sought to remove her from there. A pious man named Rabbi Yossi Man of Zeitur was there. The spirit revealed herself to him and said: Rabbi, I have been here many years and I have never harmed anybody at noon or at night (or in the day), and now this spirit comes and seeks to remove me and harm the people. He said: What shall we do? She said: Take your sticks and scythes and go attack him at noon and shout ours triumphs! ours triumphs! and he will flee. They did this and chased him away from there. They said; They did not move from there until they saw a blob of blood floating on the water. When the sages heard about it, they said: And if a thing (being) that was not created to need assistance now needs assistance, how much more so human beings. For this reason David said (in **psalms**) "He sends help from the holy place." [1]

It is both striking and exceptional that that Tanchuma makes a point of distinguishing between types of djinns, beneficent and harmful (Lev. R. 24; Tanh. B.).

1. Bar-Ilan, "Exorcism by Rabbis."

Yuhasin, Sefer: Also known as Megillat Ahimaaz, this medieval memoir of the life of Ahimaaz ben Paltiel includes accounts of **exorcisms**, shape changing, **zombie** making, and spellcasting. It is not to be confused with a later work of the same name by Abraham Zacuto.

Z

Zaamiel: (זעמיאל). “Rebuke of God.” The **angel** of whirlwinds (III Enoch).

Zaapiel: (זעפיאל). “Wrath of God.” A destructive **angel** in charge of the utterly wicked **souls** in **Gehenna**. He torments them with **rods** of burning coal that turn their flesh black. He is also identified as the angel of storms (III Enoch; BhM 5:186).

Zacuto, Abraham: Astrologer (Spanish, ca. 15th–16th century) who served in the court of Manuel I of Portugal from 1494 until the expulsion of Jews from the country in 1497. He is the author of **Sefer Yuhasin** (“The Book of Descent”), a history of the Sages of Israel, an account that includes many of the **miracles** associated with them.

Zacuto, Moses: Kabbalist and poet (Italian, ca. 17th century). His interest in ghostly possession and his accounts of performing exorcisms helped popularize these ideas in the Italian Jewish community. He was actually a sophisticated diagnostician and attempted to distinguish between genuine possession and mere mental illness. He is the author of Shoresh ha-Shemot. *SEE* EXORCISM; POSSESSION, GHOSTLY

Zagzagel: (זגזגאל). Another name for the angelic Sar ha-Torahs (Gedulat Moshe).

Zakiel: (זקיאל). “Comet of God.” A **fallen angel** who teaches mankind the art of divining through the study of **clouds** (I Enoch).

Zambri: A mythical medieval Jewish sorcerer appearing in Christian tradition. He fought (and lost) a magical duel with Pope Sylvester (Jacobus de Voragine).

Zar: A possessing evil spirit or djinn mentioned in Ethiopian Jewish traditions.

Zayin: (ז). The seventh letter of the **Hebrew alphabet**. It has the vocalic value of “z” and the numeric value of seven. It signifies the **Sabbath**, the **World to Come**, and the wholeness of reality: the six cardinal points of the physical world (**north**, south, **east**, **west**, up, down) plus the dimension of spirit. The word itself also means “penis.” [1]

1. Munk, *The Wisdom of the Hebrew Alphabet*, 104–11.

Zebulon: One of several mythical Jewish magicians of extraordinary prowess who feature prominently in Christian medieval legends.

Zechariah: The name of several people in the **Hebrew** Scriptures, most notably the post-exilic **prophet** and author of the biblical book that bears his name. The prophet Zechariah was a seer-like figure who experienced numerous vivid, highly encoded apocalyptic-style **night visions**. It is impossible to say specifically whether these were **dreams** or waking visions. It is also possible the prophet is experiencing angelic **possession** during the oracles in which he describes the malach doveir bi, "The angel that spoke with/within me."

There is a conflated tradition of a righteous figure named Zechariah who was murdered on the **Temple** grounds by killers unknown (II Chron. 28). In some versions, this was the prophet Zechariah, in others it was a noble pre-exilic person also named Zechariah. Whoever this particular Zechariah was historically, after his murder in the **Temple** his **blood** continued to bubble out of the **Earth** as a reproach to his murderers. After he captured the Temple grounds, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar tried to stop the eruption by spilling the blood of thousands of Jews over the spot, but this blood atonement proved fruitless, since the descendants of the killers were not among the victims (Zech. 1; J. Tan. 69a).

Zechut Avot: (זכות אבות). "Merits of the Ancestors." In gauging the moral worth of any generation of the people **Israel**, God adds the merit of the **Patriarchs and Matriarchs**to their descendants. The worth of the **ancestor** makes it easier for God to more readily forgive any failings of the children. Being directly descended from a particular person, such as **Joseph**, brings even more benefit (Siddur, Avot Prayer; Lam. R. proem; Ber. 20a). This belief arose from the long-standing Jewish confidence in the continuing presence of the dead and their and influence on the living has been, in different forms, a feature of Jewish belief from earliest times.

With the prophetic verse Jeremiah 31:15–16 serving as locus classicus, "A cry is heard in Ramah, wailing, bitter weeping, Rachel weeps for her children, she refuses to be comforted …" the Sages of Talmudic times believed that their ancestors were aware of what transpired on **Earth** and would plead before God on behalf of their descendants (Tan. 16a; Men. 53; Lam. R. 24). Mirroring the rise in Christian and Muslim saint veneration, zechut avot practices such as praying to them for their intercession during pilgrimages and prayers for divine intervention. The custom of graveside veneration endures and thrives to this day in some sects of Judaism, and is extended, in some cases, even to modern heroes.

Zeira, Rabbi: Talmudic Sage (ca. 4th century). Working with Raba bar Joseph, he created a **golem**. In another incident mentioned in **Talmud**, Raba sent a golem to Zeira, who immediately turned the creature back to dust. On another occasion, an ominous **dream** caused him to make a pilgrimage from Iraq to Israel (Ber. 57a).

Zeira, Rabbi: Talmudic Sage (ca. 2nd century). This Sage was a talented diagnostician of **witchcraft**. He restored to human form a person who had been shape-changed into an ass (Sanh. 67a).

Zer Anpin: (זר ענפין). In Sefer **Zohar**, this is the aspect of God's generativity, God as Creator. It is understood to be the androgynous divine source of life that is mirrored in the human genital forms (Bahir 30:168–74).Later sources, perhaps euphemistically, identify the Zer Anpin as God's "beard." It eventually forms one element in the Lurianic concept of the **Partzufim**. *SEE* PHALLUS.

Zera Kodesh: "Seed of Holiness." A 17th-century handbook that explains the procedures for exorcizing spirits of the dead. *SEE* DYBBUK; EXORCISM.

Zerubbabel, Sefer: An **apocalyptic** text of Late Antiquity ascribed to the authorship of the post-Exilic Jewish leader Zerubbabel, which describes the end of the world. Many of the traditions concerning **Armilus**, an "Antichrist" like figure, appear here, as do tales of Hephzibah, the mother of the **Messiah**.

Zebul: (זבול). "Dwelling." One of the **seven heavens**(Chag. 12b–13a), it is the plane on which the Heavenly **Temple** exists and the angelic **priests** continue their **sacrifices** in God's honor. The name is derived from Habakkuk 3:11.

Zion, Mount: (הר ציון/Har Tzion, also Har ha-Bayit). Also known as Mount Moriah and the **Temple** Mount, it is historically the eastern hill of **Jerusalem** situated between the Valley of Hinnom and the Valley Kidron, which is the site of the First and Second Temples. It is the point where God first created **light** and began the creation of the universe (Ps. 50:2; Eccl. R. 1:1) and the Even ha-Shetiyah, the Foundation Stone that holds back the **waters** of the **abyss**, first emerged from primordial **chaos**. It is the center of the universe (Tanchuma, Kedoshim 10). **Adam** was created from the dust of the **mountain**, from the spot where the **altar** would eventually rest (Mid. Konen 2:27). **Noah** made his offerings to God there after **the Flood**. When the Children of Israel needed to cross the Reed Sea to escape Pharaoh, God transported Mount Moriah to the bottom of the sea, and the

Israelites walked across on it (MdRI BeShallach).

The mount is a place of revelation. According to Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, it was miraculously formed from several hills to be the place where the Akedah, the trial of Isaac would take place (15). There **Abraham** almost sacrificed his son **Isaac**, when an **angel** appeared, telling him not to kill his son (Gen. 22). **Jacob** also had his **dream**/vision of angels while sleeping on the mount (Gen. 28:11).

In recent centuries, the term "Mount Zion" has been transferred from the eastern ridge above the biblical City of David to a spur of the western ridge of Jerusalem, across from the original Mount Zion. This is a modern misnomer.

Zipporah: The Midianite wife of **Moses**. When her father Jethro first encountered Moses, he threw Moses into a pit. She kept him alive ten years by secretly feeding him until her father relented (*Sefer Zichronot* 46:9). She protected her husband from supernatural attack by circumcising their son Gershom and then throwing the detached foreskin in front of Moses while reciting verses of power. Some sources regard the assailant to be Satan, others, destructive **angels** (Ex. 4; Ned. 32a; Ex. R. 5:8). *SEE* CIRCUMCISION; SATAN; SERPENT.; WOMEN.

Ziviel: "Affliction of God." An **angel** mentioned in the *Book of the Great Name*.

Zivvuga Kaddisha: (זיווגא קדישא). "Holy Union." The concept of a hieros gamos, of divine union, between the masculine and feminine aspects of God (Zohar I:207b; Zohar III:7a). This is a major theme in Zoharic **Kabbalah** . **Isaac Luria** taught that there are five types of Zivvuga that occur within different levels of the **Godhead** (Sefer ha-Hezyonot 212–17). He believed that humans engaging in sex at different times, with different intentions (such as procreation versus companionship) mirrored and influenced these higher unions.[1] *SEE* SEFIROT; SEX; SHEKHINAH.

1. Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, 196–205.

Ziz: (זיז). A giant mythological bird, sometimes called the Queen of Birds (Ps. 50:11). It may be the Hebrew version of Anzu, the mythological primeval bird of Mesopotamian **myth**. It's biblical roots are found in **psalms** 50 and 80:14. In Psalm 50 it parallels **Behemoth**, suggesting both are the sovereigns of their animal type. It is cosmic in its dimensions:

> Rabbah b. Bar Hanna further related: Once we traveled on board a ship and we saw a bird standing up to its ankles in **water** while its head reached the sky. We thought the water was not deep and wished to go down and cool

ourselves, but a Bat Kol called out: “Do not go down there, for a carpenter’s axe was dropped [in the water] seven years ago and it has not [yet] reached the bottom.” R. Ashi said: That [bird] was Ziz Sadeh “for it is written: And Ziz Sadeh is with me.” (B.B. 73b)

Its wings when spread eclipse the **sun** (Gen. R. 19:4; Lev. R. 22.10; *Mid. Teh.* 18.23). It can stand in the sea and the **water** only covers its ankles, while its head reaches **heaven**. When Ziz rides on the back of **Leviathan**, the bird can see the **Throne of Glory** and sing to God. The beating of its wings can change the direction of the winds. Like Leviathan and Behemoth, Ziz is destined to be served at the messianic banquet (B.B. 73a–74a). *SEE* ANIMALS.

Zodiac: (גלגל). The system of dividing the **night** sky into zones for the purpose of astrological reading and interpretation. Zodiacs are quite ancient and may be alluded to in the **Bible** as early as the 7th century BCE, where a reference to mazzalot (stars, or perhaps, constellations) is understood by some scholars as a term for a zodiac (2 Kings 23:5). Others speculate an earlier reference to the zodiac appears as graffiti on a tomb site at Khibet el Qom in Israel (8th century BCE). Based on their order the four initials written there, ***alef***, bet, mem, and alef, suggest they may be referring to four signs of the zodiac.

Jewish zodiac systems derived from, or at least influenced by, the Western traditions of **astrology** are evident by Late Antiquity, when the mystical manual **Sefer Yetzirah** makes repeated references to Greco-Roman zodiac houses such as the Gedi (Capricorn), the Shor (Taurus), and the Dagim (Pieces) (SY 4:6–5:10, Short Recension). More surprising, a magnificent mosaic zodiac featuring all the familiar houses is the decorative centerpiece of the floor of the 5th-century Beit Alfa **synagogue** that was unearthed in northern Israel. By this time the names of the twelve zodiac signs (mazzalot) are established: Taleh (Aries), Shor (Taurus), Teomim (Gemini), Sartan (Cancer), Aryeh (Leo), Betulah (Virgo), Moznayim (Libra), Akrav (Scorpio), Keshet (Sagittarius), Gedi (Capricorn), D’li (Aquarius), and Dagim (Pisces) (*Yalkut* 418).

By the early Middle Ages, the zodiac was an accepted part of Jewish astrology and had been fused with traditional Jewish **angelology**, with each house having its own principal angel and heavenly host (Ber. 32b). One **Midrash** uses the zodiac signs as an allegory to chart the progress of a man’s life (Tanh. Ha’azinu 1). For each of the houses of the zodiac, God created thirty hosts of angels; one host for each of the 360 degrees of the heavenly circumference (Ber. 32b).

Sections of Hebrew magical manuals such as **Sefer ha-Razim** ("The Book of Mysteries") and Sefer Raziel ha-Malach ("The Book of [the Angel] Raziel") are devoted to the influence of the zodiac over the universe.

Mainstream figures in medieval Jewry were more divided on the issue of astral influences than the Jewish populous, who generally accepted the power of the stars. The rationalist philosopher **Maimonides**, for example, utterly dismissed the value of astrology, while others, like the Bible exegete Abraham ibn Ezra, gave it great credence. The physician Abraham Yagel (Italian, ca. 16th century) even used the zodiac in his diagnosis and treatment of his patients. Interest in the supernatural influence of the zodiac has faded among Jews, but has never entirely gone away.



Zodiac mosaic in 6th century Beit Alpha synagogue

Zohar, Sefer ha-: "The Book of Radiance." This massive masterwork of Spanish **Kabbalah** is the single most influential work of esotericism in Judaism. Part esoteric commentary, part medieval romance, and part mystical gospel, the Zohar is ostensibly the work of the 2nd-century Galilean Sage Simon bar Yochai. In fact, most of the collection is the work of Moses (shem tov) de Leon of Guadalajara (ca. 13th century), with other sections added by anonymous contributors. Rabbi Moses composed the Zohar, partly through automatic writing, in a series of booklets he sold and distributed over his lifetime. As a result, the Zohar text we have today is actually an anthology of the surviving manuscript booklets brought together at the advent of the printing press.

The core of the published book (18th century) consists of three sections: commentaries on Genesis, Exodus, and the last three books of the **Torah**. In addition, these are usually published with several related compositions: partial commentaries on **Song of Songs**, Ruth, and Lamentations, the early Zohar Chadash, the later Ra'aya Meheimna, and the much later Tikkunei Zohar.

Written in an eccentric, poetically charged Aramaic, the Zohar is at turns lyrical, fantastic, and downright cryptic. At times the text revels in paradox, riddles, and obscure and elliptical pronouncements. It is also charged with erotic themes throughout.

The single most outstanding idea in it is its elaborate and complex concept of the **sefirot** (the **Pleroma** of divine powers). These ten divine forces, unfolding at different levels, revealing rungs of divine purpose and function, are the centerpiece of the Zohar's theosophy. The workings of these sefirot are then applied to the **Bible**, simultaneously revealing the inner workings of the Pleroma and illustrating the divine energies at play in all aspects of the biblical narratives. Every figure and event in the Bible is correlated to the sefirot, highlighting the analogous movement of forces both divine and earthly.

The Zohar also gives a highly mythological view of the cosmos, with the forces of the sefirot also expressed through **demons** , heavenly beings, and mythic locales. Most startling of all is the frankly sexual interpretation the Zohar applies to the **Godhead**. God has both masculine and feminine aspects that are engaged in a dynamic divine drama of ongoing hieros gamos in order to achieve perfect unity. The people **Israel** is a crucial element of the lowest of the sefirot, **Malach**, and has a central role in sustaining this divine process of unification. Mortals effect this ongoing divine unification through diligent observance of the mitzvot, bringing the right intention to their performance, and by other specific acts of imitato dei.

Another outstanding aspect of Zoharic theosophy is its interpretation of **evil**. Drawing on the teachings of Treatise on the Left Emanation, the Zohar teaches that evil is really an **emanation** of the sefirah Gevurah, of divine justice, that becomes sustained and distorted by human wickedness.

The work devotes surprisingly little attention to the personal mystical experience or how to achieve it. The one distinctive mystical pursuit mentioned in the Zohar is devekut, "cleaving," or erotic-passionate attachment to God.[1] Mostly this is achieved through the mystical revelations that unfold in sacred **study**, though other mystical customs—intensive **prayer** and **meditation**, self-denial, and ecstasy-inducing practices, like **sleep** deprivation—also play a role.

Most importantly, Zohar consistently sees humanity (specifically Jews) and the lower sefirot on a kind of continuum, blurring the distinction between Israel and its God. This is why Jews both facilitate and participate in the ongoing **Tikkun** of zivvuga kaddisha, “Holy Union.”

The impact of the Zohar on subsequent Jewish **mysticism** is unparalleled. Its importance soared in the aftermath of the catastrophic expulsion of Spanish Jewry, as those exiles found meaning for their plight in the complex interplay of the sefirot. In some segments of the Jewish community, the Zohar eventually stood on par with the Bible and **Talmud** as an authoritative text. It also had a profound impact on Christian Qabbalists of the Renaissance and later, who combed the murky language of the Zohar for secreted references to the Trinity and other Christian doctrines.

1. Matt, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition, vol. 1*, lxix–lxxi.

Zohar Chadash: “New Radiance.” Paradoxically, this “new” section of the **Zohar** is one of the oldest parts of the collection, a section including many esoteric Midrashim.

Zombies: ([illegible]). While there is not a large tradition of stories about people reanimating dead bodies (as opposed to fully resurrecting a person), there are a few medieval and early modern European stories of how one may make a zombie by writing the **secret Name of God** on a parchment and inserting it under the tongue of a corpse or into an incision in the skin. Removing the parchment reverses the effect (**Sefer Yuhasin**). This description closely parallels traditions on the construction of a **golem**. In one account, the dead, driven by a need unfulfilled during life, can spontaneously start to walk the **Earth** again (Shivhei ha-Ari). Virtually all other traditions assume that zombies must be animated by an adept (Ma’aseh Buch 171). *SEE* RESURRECTION.

ABBREVIATIONS OF CITATIONS FROM TRADITIONAL TEXTS

Abbreviation of Biblical Books					
Gen.	Genesis	Ez.	Ezra	Joel	Joel
Ex.	Exodus	Neh.	Nehemiah	Am.	Amos
Lev.	Leviticus	Esth.	Esther	Jon.	Jonah
Num.	Numbers	Job	Job	Mic.	Micah

Deut.	Deuteronomy	Prov.	Proverbs	Nah.	Nahum
Josh.	Joshua	Ecc.	Ecclesiastes	Hab.	Habakkuk
Judg.	Judges	S of S	Song of Songs	Zeph.	Zephaniah
Ruth	Ruth	Isa.	Isaiah	Hag.	Haggai
1 Sam.	1 Samuel	Lam.	Lamentations	Zech.	Zechariah
2 Sam.	2 Samuel	Jer.	Jeremiah	Mal.	Malachi
1 Kings	1 Kings	Ezek.	Ezekiel	1 Cor.	1 Corinthians
2 Kings	2 Kings	Dan.	Daniel	2 Cor.	2 Corinthians
1 Chr.	1 Chronicles	Hos.	Hosea	Rev.	Revelation
2 Chr.	2 Chronicles	Ps./Pss.	Psalms		

Abbreviation of Talmud Tractates					
Ar.	Arakin	Ker.	Keriot	Pes.	Pesachim
Avot	Avot	Ket.	Ketubot	R.H.	Rosh Hashanah
A.Z.	Avodah Zarah	Kid.	Kiddushin	Sanh.	Sanhedrin
B.B.	Baba Batra	Kin.	Kinnim	Sem.	Semahot
Bech.	Bechorot	Kut.	Kutim	Shab.	Shabbat
Ber.	Berachot	Mak.	Makkot	Shek.	Shekalim
Betz.	Betzah	Makh.	Makhshirin	Shev.	Shevuot
Bik.	Bikkurim	Me.	Meilah	Sof.	Sofrim
B.K.	Baba Kama	Meg.	Megillah	Sot.	Sotah
B.M.	Baba Metzia	Men.	Menahot	Suk.	Sukkah
Chag.	Chagigah	Mez.	Mezuzah	Tam.	Tamid
Chal.	Challah	Midd.	Middot	Tan.	Ta'anit
Chul.	Chullin	Mik.	Mikvaot	Tem.	Terumah
De.	Demai	M.K.	Moed Katan	Toh.	Toharot
Ed.	Ediyyot	Ned.	Nedarim	Yad.	Yadayim
Eruv.	Eruvin	Nega.	Nega'im	Yev.	Yevamot
Git.	Gittin	Nid.	Niddah	Yoma	Yoma
Hor.	Horayot	Oh.	Ohalot	Zev.	Zevahim
Ka.	Kallah	Or.	Orlah		
Kel.	Kelim	Pe.	Peah		

Midrash, Kabbalah, and Other Traditional Sources			
AbbS	Alef-Bet ben Sira	Mid. Teh.	Midrash Tehillim (Psalms)
AdRN	Avot de-Rabbi Natan	M.T.	Mishneh Torah
Ant.	**Antiquities of the Jews** (Josephus)	Num. R.	Numbers Rabbah
B.	Babylonian Talmud	Op.	De Opifico Mundi
Bahir	Sefer ha-Bahir	PdRE	Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer
BhM	Beit ha-Midrash	PdRK	Pesikta de-Rav Kahana
ChdM	**Charba de Moshe**	PGM	Papyri Graecae Magicae
Deut. R.	Deuteronomy Rabbah	PR	Pesikta Rabbati
Dia.	Dialogues	Ruth R.	Ruth Rabbah
Eccl. R.	Ecclesiastes Rabbah	SA	Shulchan Aruch
Enoch	Enoch (I, II, III)	SCh	**Sefer Chasidim**
Es. R.	Esther Rabbah	**SGE**	**Seder Gan Eden**
Ex. R.	Exodus Rabbah	**ShB**	**Shivhei ha-BeSHT**
EY	Ein Yaakov	**ShR**	**Sefer ha-Razim**
Gen. R.	Genesis Rabbah	Sif.	Sifra
J.	Jerusalem Talmud	Sif. D.	Sifre Deuteronomy
Lam. R.	Lamentations Rabbah	S of S R.	Song of Songs Rabbah
Lev. R.	Leviticus Rabbah	**SY**	**Sefer Yetzirah**
LOTJ	**Legends of the Jews**	Tanh.	Midrash Tanhuma
M.	Mishnah	Tanh. B.	Midrash Tanhuma (Buber)
MdRI	Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael	TdE	Tanna de Eliyahu
MG	Masekhet Gehinnom	Tos.	Tosefta
MhG	Midrash ha-Gadol	T.Z.	Tikkunei Zohar
Mid. Avkir	Midrash Avkir	**War**	**The Jewish War** (Josephus)
Mid. Konen	Midrash Konen	Yalkut	Yalkut Shimoni
Mid. Mish.	Midrash Mishlei (Proverbs)	ZCh	Zohar Chadash

Mid. Sam.	Midrash Samuel	Zohar	Sefer ha-Zohar

Systems for citations vary from one Jewish document to the next. Citations such as “8a” and “8b” refer to the front and flip side of a folio page. Hebrew citations following the title of a Midrashic work, such as “Yitro,” refer to the parshiyot, or traditional divisions of Torah, which run many pages and will require further browsing. Short documents will often not include more page-specific citations.

Quick Reference Glossary
Of Frequently Used Terms

Aggadah: Stories, narratives, and legends; all the nonlegal materials in rabbinic literature.

Apotropaic: Protective.

BCE/CE: “Before the Common Era/Common Era.” These dating designations coincide with the Christocentric dating system of “BC/AD.” Thus, 1497 CE is the same as 1497 AD.

Bible: For the purposes of this encyclopedia, “Bible” refers to the Hebrew canonical Bible, also called TaNaKH, consisting of thirty-nine books and being effectively identical to the Christian “Old Testament.”

Classical Antiquity: For the purposes of this encyclopedia, the period from about 500 BCE to 200 CE.

Early Judaism: The spiritual expressions of the Jewish people from the end of the Babylonian exile (516 BCE) until the rise of the Sages (200 CE).

Gloss: An interpretation, clarification, or comment inserted into an earlier text by a later copyist. This phenomenon occurs throughout classical Jewish literature, making every document, including the Bible, a work of composite authorship.

Greco-Roman Period: For the purposes of this encyclopedia, from 300 BCE to 500 CE.

Hermetic: Refers to the teachings and disciplines of Western non-Jewish magic most closely associated with alchemy and the Islamic-Renaissance fusion of astronomy and magic.

Kabbalah: A Jewish mystical movement of the 12th to 16th centuries, but also used as a catchall term for Jewish mysticism.

Medieval Period: For the purposes of this encyclopedia, the period from the Muslim conquests (8th century) until the Reformation (16th century).

Midrash: Homiletic and legal interpretations of the Bible, usually collected into books.

Mishna, Or Mishnah: The core document of the Talmud and the first great text of rabbinic Judaism, compiled around 200 CE.

Modern: For the purposes of this encyclopedia, the 17th to 20th centuries.

Numinous: Spiritual forces and entities of an awesome and/or terrifying aspect.

Parsha, Parshiyot: The traditional/medieval system of dividing the Torah into fifty-four sections.

Persian Period: A period lasting from 500 BCE to 300 BCE.

Prophylactic: Preventative protection.

Rabbinic Literature: All literary writings of the Sages and their immediate successors (100 BCE–1100 CE), such as Mishnah, Talmud, and the Midrashim.

Rabbinic Period: The period when the Sages came to define Jewish spiritual practice. Though the first of the Sages emerged around 200 BCE, their influence really peaked from about 200 CE to the Islamic conquests of the 8th century. This roughly coincides with the period dubbed "Late Antiquity."

Renaissance: For the purposes of this encyclopedia, the 15th through early 17th centuries.

Sages: The Rabbis of the Talmudic and immediate post-Talmudic eras who defined rabbinic Judaism.

Talmud: The Mishnah combined with its vast commentaries (Gemara). There are two versions of the Talmud, the Babylonian and the Palestinian (or Jerusalem) versions, compiled over the 5th and 6th centuries CE.

Targum: An early translation of the Bible from Hebrew, usually into Aramaic. The translations are often packed with interpretative glosses, paraphrases, and unusual readings.

Tellurian: Of subterranean, underground, or underworld origins.

Theosophy: Any philosophic system based on mystical or extra-rational insight into the nature of God and the universe.

Theurgy: The word *theurgy* comes from the practices of Egyptian Neoplatonists. For the purposes of this encyclopedia, I distinguish theurgic from magical practices when the ritual or act involves invoking/adjuring and influencing sentient spirits (including angels, demons, or even a name of God).

Torah: The Five Books of Moses; the first five books of the Bible, and the spiritual "Constitution" of the Jewish people. The word can also be used as a

metonym for the full scope of all Jewish teachings, or even as a synonym for "Judaism."

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